

SPORTS PINK

65p

Home of Hampshire sport May 27 2017

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ASHAW THING

Wayne 'Pie Man' Shaw on his new
role at AFC Totton PAGES 2, 3, 4



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Silva lining for Watford

Marco Silva has been appointed Watford's new head coach following the departure of Walter Mazzarri.

Sport Pink looks at some of the things the Portuguese has to do as the ninth man in charge in five years.

WORK OUT WHAT THE POZZOS WANT

The manager's office at Vicarage Road has had a revolving door in recent years as the owning Pozzo family have been quick to dispense with head coaches who have not met their expectations. Last season Quique Sanchez Flores kept them up and took Watford to an FA Cup semi-final but was still sacked. Mazzarri avoided the drop this time around but went all the same. Silva has to find a way to keep the owners happy if he wants to last longer than most of his predecessors.

UPGRADE THE SQUAD

Six successive defeats saw the Hornets limp towards safety, finishing 17th, and there are reinforcements required in all departments. Four of the existing six centre-backs will be over



Marco Silva

30 by the start of the new season. They managed just four goals in their last eight matches – three of which came in one match – with Troy Deeney (10) and Etienne Capoue (seven) the only players to score more than four league goals all season.

MAKE WATFORD MORE COMPETITIVE

The team has regressed after finishing 13th with 45 points – eight clear of the bottom three – in the previous campaign. They conceded three or more goals in in almost a quarter of their matches this season, lost 20 matches and took 12 points from a possible 57 away from home.

NON LEAGUE

'It's something to

Wendy Gee



HE jokes about it being his new 'sausage' role.

But 'Pie Man' Wayne Shaw is deadly serious about making a success of his job as AFC Totton's commercial manager.

The larger-than-life goalkeeper has been invited on board by chairman Wayne Mew and vice-chairman Dave Penny to raise the Stags' profile in the community and attract new sponsors to the Southern One South & West club.

Born in nearby Millbrook and a long-time resident of Totton, Shaw began last season low-key as goalkeeping coach/community liaison officer at Sutton United and ended it as a full-blown footballing celebrity.

His pasty-eating antics during Sutton's FA Cup fifth round tie against Arsenal ultimately cost him his job at Gander Green Lane after the FA launched an investigation into a potential breach of betting rules.

That sparked a huge outpouring of public support for the man affectionately known as the 'Roly-Poly Goalie' and his followers on social media surged from three to five figures in the blink of an eye.

And that, Shaw believes, will work in his favour when it comes to spreading the word about AFC Totton.

He marvelled: "I had 600 people following me on Twitter and that grew to nearly 20,000 overnight!"

"It's all about the power of social media these days, it's amazing. I'm out and about talking to businesses and I've told them that anything that goes through the club Twitter, I can re-tweet."

"The job at Totton is commission-based, they've got no money as such to pay me a salary, but I'm just trying to do my bit to bring the community together."

"They've got a great facility at the Testwood Stadium and it's about getting people to use it."

A promising schoolboy centre-half with Saints, Shaw was a teammate of Matt Le Tissier and Alan Shearer and intends using his ex-Saints connections to get this Totton project off the ground.

"It's something to get my teeth into," he said, no pun intended.

"We're going to create a patrons' lounge in the downstairs boardroom at Totton for 50 or 60 people and every other game I'll ask people like Nicky Banger, Daddys (Jason Dodd) and Glenn Cockerill to come along as guests."

"I've played for the Ex-Saints and have a lot of friends and contacts. Everyone's willing to help when you're just starting out."



Wayne Shaw and some of AFC Totton's younger players.

"I'm not saying we can do an Eastleigh but, with no disrespect, the facility at Totton is probably better than what Eastleigh had to begin with."

"What Eastleigh have done sets the benchmark for local football and the news of the (£100,000) Budweiser grant for Sholing is fantastic for them too."

As a former Totton player, Shaw wants his local club to share in that local non-League feel-good factor – not least because the Stags have been good to him in the past.

Recalling the days of the late Bob Devoy, he said: "Bob looked

after me when he was chairman and that goes a long way."

"Everyone used to stick together then and it's a case now of trying to get some of the old people back to the club and making it a family affair again."

"I go back years with Wayne Mew and Dave Penny. I was with Wayne when he started the centre of excellence stuff at Eastleigh and I've been using Dave Penny as my physio for 25 years."

While Shaw cherishes happy memories of Totton stretching back almost 20 years, he is also keen for the club to look to the future.

And in Louis Langdown and Adam Wilde he believes the Stags have got themselves an innovative, young management team to lead the Stags into a bright new era.

"What they're doing with the younger players is great," he said. "If Louis gets the spine of the team right, there will be exciting times ahead."

"Louis likes playing football the right way, the same as Adam, and with the contacts he has in the pro game and the respect they've got, it should be good."

● AFC TOTTON have hailed

NON LEAGUE

get my teeth into'



The picture that started 'pie-gate' – Wayne Shaw tucks into his snack.

Giro finely poised for final day

THE 100th Giro d'Italia is delicately poised ahead of the final day time trial after Thibaut Pinot won a thrilling stage 20 into Asiago on Saturday.

Movistar's Nairo Quintana finished fifth to hold on to pink but the Colombian's grip is tenuous ahead of the finale in Milan as he leads by 39 seconds from defending champion and home favourite Vincenzo Nibali (Bahrain-Merida), with Pinot's victory moving him into third place overall.

Team Sunweb's Tom Dumoulin, who had held the pink jersey until Friday's stage 19, finished 15 seconds behind the front group and slips off the podium places into fourth but, with a deficit of 53 seconds, the time-trial specialist is still very much in contention for overall victory.

Pinot won ahead of Katusha's Zakarin and Nibali – who took four bonus seconds – while Quintana was fifth to miss out on the extra time available.

Nibali is no slouch in a time trial and the general classification could hardly be closer.

Wayne Shaw as a key summer signing.

Although the famous 'Roly-Poly Goalie' won't be donning his gloves for the Stags, they are backing the charismatic 20-stone stopper to be a huge asset off the field in his new role as commercial manager.

Once met, never forgotten, the former ice cream man has been a familiar face in and around Totton for years.

But his pasty-eating antics during Sutton United's FA Cup tie against Arsene Wenger's Arsenal catapulted the former Totton and Eastleigh goalkeep-

er to a whole new level of fame.

A statement from the Stags said: "AFC Totton are delighted to announce that local, national and international celebrity Wayne Shaw has joined the Stags as our new commercial manager."

"The club is already well on its way to strengthening the playing side for 2017/18 with manager Louis Langdown having already added some quality signings.

"However, chairman Wayne Mew and vice-chairman Dave Penny have made a huge signing of their own by getting

Wayne Shaw in on the commercial side.

"We believe having Wayne on board will help this wonderful football club take a huge step towards realising its undoubted potential.

"Wayne has the bubbly personality and he is a Totton lad, so if anybody can make a success of this role then it will be Wayne Shaw."

Just like the rest of the local footballing world, Totton marvelled at Shaw's headline-hitting rise to prominence.

Continued on page 4

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NON LEAGUE



Who next for Hull?

HULL will start life in the Championship with a new manager after the departure of Marco Silva.

The 39-year-old was only appointed by the Tigers in the new year and - despite 21 points from 18 games - was unable to prevent them slipping back into the second tier.

The club are now seeking their fourth boss in less than 12 months and the Sports Pink profiles some potential candidates.

STEVE MCCLAREN

There would be a degree of sentiment involved in the appointment of McClaren, a former Tigers midfielder who made more than 150 appearances during six years with the club. Most candidates would struggle to match McClaren's CV, which includes the England, Middlesbrough and Newcastle jobs, while he is well-versed in life in the Championship too. He may feel he has a point to prove.

ALEX NEIL

The former Norwich boss is looking to get back into work, having been sacked in March after the Canaries' expected promotion challenge never really materialised. However, the 35-year-old has previously demonstrated he is capable of getting a team out of the



Steve McClaren

Championship after doing so with Norwich two years ago.

ALAN PARDEW

The ex-Saint ticks many boxes as an out-of-work veteran boss and also has a previous Championship promotion on his CV. His last seven years in management were spent in the top flight with either Newcastle or Crystal Palace so there may be a reluctance on his part to drop down a level.

NIGEL PEARSON

Pearson has been out of work since October last year, when his brief spell in charge at Derby ended controversially - just as his time at Leicester did in 2015. He built his reputation with the Foxes and has been credited with laying the foundations for their amazing Premier League success - and he has already admitted his interest in any vacancy at Middlesbrough, where he is a former captain.

RYAN GIGGS

The former Manchester United star has made no secret of his desire to manage in his own right, having had a taste of it during a four-game spell at Old Trafford following David Moyes' departure towards the end of the 2013/14 season. He may lack experience, but he would bring a "wow" factor to the club.

Totton 'proud' to have Shaw back on board



Wayne Shaw. Pic by Tony Smith.

from page 3

"When Wayne was pictured on the bench by TV cameras during Sutton United's 1-0 win over Leeds United in the FA Cup fourth round, many TV interviews followed in the UK and abroad, especially after Sutton were drawn against the mighty Arsenal," they added.

"However, not even Wayne could be prepared for what followed.

"Shaw's popularity went through the roof when he made the national and international headlines for eating a pasty during Sutton United's live televised FA Cup tie against Premier League Arsenal.

"Wayne not only became front page

news because of this, but he was in demand for TV interviews across the globe.

"Not bad for a lad born in Millbrook and living in Totton!

"We are proud to have Wayne on board and we wish him every success in his role as AFC Totton's commercial manager."

● FORMER AFC Bournemouth academy midfielder Jake McCarthy has penned a one-year deal for Weymouth.

The 21-year-old, who can also play in defence, has had previous stints in non-League on loan to AFC Totton, Dorchester Town and, most recently, Maidstone United.

He is the second former Cherries players to have signed for the Southern Premier club this week, following versatile defender Callum Buckley into the Bob Lucas Stadium.

Discussing McCarthy's signing, Weymouth assistant manager Paul Maitland said: "It's a huge coup to bring a player of his calibre to the club. He will bring a spark back to the midfield."

Both McCarthy and Buckley have worked with new Terras boss Mark Molesley as part of the youth set-up at Bournemouth.

Buckley, also 21, had most recently been out on loan to Eastleigh's National League rivals Aldershot Town.

New lease of life

Wendy Gee



MARVIN McLean has found a new lease of life since dropping into the left-back role at Sholing.

In fact the zippy 29-year-old looks so at home that manager Dave Diaper reckons the former winger might have made the pro game had he played there all along.

McLean is a home-grown talent in every sense, having worked his way through Portsmouth Road the reserve ranks to become an integral part of the first-team picture for the last ten years.

He reached the 500 milestone of Sholing appearances in March and was so consistent throughout 2016/17 that Diaper had no hesitation naming him manager's player-of-the-year.

McLean's name will forever be etched in Boatmen's history having scored the winner at Wembley in 2014's never-to-be-forgotten FA Vase success.

"Marvin's been brilliant," smiled Diaper. "He's played 500-odd games and he's so laid-back it's just amazing.

"This year he's been superb. I haven't seen a player beat him.

"Most full-backs get beaten a fair bit but, where Marvin used to play out wide, he knows what wingers are thinking. People try and push the ball past him and beat him for pace - but they'll never beat Marvin!

"If he'd started his career at left-back I reckon he'd have made the pro game. He's that good."

It's not just McLean's talent that so impresses Diaper, it's his loyalty and devotion to the Boatmen's cause.

"Marvin's not one of those players chasing the dream, he's living it with Sholing," he said.

"He's happy where he is.

"At this rate he'll end up with



Sholing's Marvin McLean, right, in the Southampton Senior Cup final.

600-700 games under his belt and there are not many players who can boast that.

"For some players it's all about the money, but not Marvin. He just loves playing for Sholing.

"He's such a good player and such a nice lad as well."

While McLean will be staying put next season, Diaper expects classy right-back TJ Cuthbertson to move on from the Sydenhams Premier club.

Cuthbertson rejoined the Boat-

men in January on a deal until the end of the season after parting company with National League South crisis club Gosport Borough.

He did enough at Privett Park to prove he is more than capable of handling that level and Diaper said: "TJ's such a good player that we expect him to move on.

"He's the only one I haven't asked to re-sign for Sholing. TJ's his own man and he needs to sort out what he wants to do. Everyone

knows how well he did at Gosport and he was excellent for us in the Southampton Senior Cup final.

"If he does go, he knows there's always a place for him here if things don't work out. He remembered that when he was at Gosport."

Dan Mason, Sholing's 45-goal Wessex Premier top scorer, picked up the players' player and golden boot awards, while 17-year-old full-back Owen Royle was named young player-of-the-year.

SAINTS



Wembley covered in Matt finish

Simon Carter



Veteran former Saints midfielder Matt Oakley is to retire at the end of the season – and his swansong could be at Wembley.

The 39-year-old will draw to an end a 23-year playing career after Exeter City's final game of the season – the League Two play-off final against Blackpool this Sunday.

Oakley has played nearly 200 games for the Devonians – managed by his former Dell colleague Paul Tisdale – over a five-and-a-half-year spell at the club.

Oakley said of his decision: "I think you just get to the point where you know it's the right time.

"I was probably going to do it a lot longer ago, before I came down here (to Exeter), that was my thinking.

"However, having worked with Paul (Tisdale) in the way that I've been able to train, it has extended my playing days.

"Paul's enabled me to spend a lot more time on my recovery, whereas I wasn't able to do that before.

"I think two years ago I played 48 games in one season, which was the most I've ever managed in my career in one campaign.

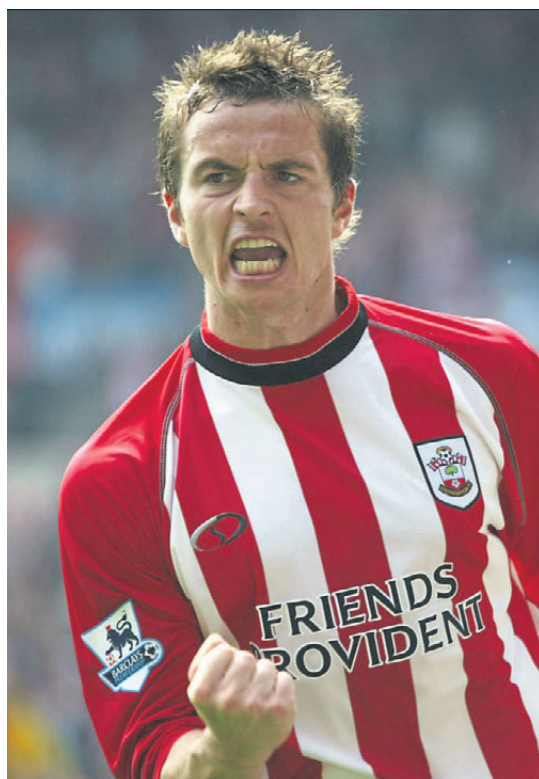
Managing my body

"The ability to keep going into my late 30s was just about managing my body differently and Paul was a manager that enabled me to do that."

Oakley represented Saints in the 2003 FA Cup final against Arsenal, and was just one of two players from that squad still playing professionally in 2016/17 – Chris Baird being the other.

Oakley was a regular in Gordon Strachan's side that season, appearing in 31 Premier League games. He also scored his only two goals in 2002/03 in Saints' 2-1 FA Cup fourth round replay win at Millwall.

Oakley started the following season in the first team but suffered a major knee ligament injury in September 2003.



Matt Oakley celebrates his goal for Saints.

That was to rule him out for over a year, and he made his return against Charlton on Boxing Day 2004.

Oakley's last game for Saints came in a 3-0 win against Sheffield Wednesday in February 2006.

At the end of 2005/06, boss George Burley only offered him a one-year contract – which was duly rejected.

Oakley went on to sign for Derby on a free, and had the last laugh on Burley when he helped the Rams beat Saints in the 2006/07 Championship play-off semi final en route to promotion.

Oakley moved on again to Leicester City in the summer of 2008 – signed by ex-Saints boss Nigel Pearson after the Foxes had just been relegated to League 1.

Yet again, he helped his new club win promotion at the first attempt – skipping Leicester to the third tier title.

He first joined Exeter on loan in the 2011/12 season, with the move made permanent after being released by Leicester in the summer of 2012.

Oakley celebrated his 600th professional league appearance last September, and his last outing for Exeter – on Good Friday – was the 615th of his long career.

His first appearance had come in Saints' colours as a sub at Goodison Park in May 1995 – a few months before he signed his first professional contract for the club.

Oakley went on to make 262 appearances for the club.

What was happening in the world when Totti made Roma debut?

Francesco Totti will call time on his 24-year career as a Roma player after the game with Genoa.

The Italian striker, now 40, made his first Giallorossi appearance on March 28, 1993.

Here, the Sports Pink looks back at what else was going on when a teenage Totti debuted.

BEN JOHNSON BANNED

At the beginning of March, Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson was banned from athletics for life after failing a drugs test for a second time. He had won the 100 metres at the Seoul Olympics in 1988, but was stripped of his gold medal after testing positive for performance-enhancing drugs.

WEDNESDAY AT WEMBLEY

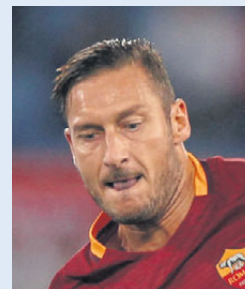
Two weeks before Totti made his senior Roma bow, there were wild celebrations at Hillsborough after Sheffield Wednesday beat Blackburn 2-1 – thanks to goals from David Hirst and Mark Bright – to book a Wembley date with Arsenal. Totti was a confirmed first-team player by the time the League Cup final came around, and Wednesday suffered heartache as Arsenal won 2-1 with a Steve Morrow clincher.

TOP OF THE POPS

Shaggy, who later enjoyed more fame with his 1995 song 'Boombastic', was number one in the UK singles charts with his breakthrough single 'Oh Carolina'. Days after Totti ran out as a substitute at Brescia, Shaggy was topped by The Bluebelles and their violin-laden song 'Young At Heart'.

BRANDON LEE KILLED

American actor and martial artist Brandon Lee, the son of Bruce Lee, was accidentally shot by a prop gun while filming 'The Crow' in North Carolina. The revolver used in the scene was loaded with blanks, but a dummy round was trapped in the barrel, and it mortally wounded Lee when it was fired.



TELLY ADDICTS

Back in spring 1993 we were watching Mr Blobby on 'Noel's House Party', 'Cheff!' starring Lenny Henry was the latest sitcom and the popular 1960s medical drama 'Dr Finlay's Casebook' was revived with a new cast. Totti might even have celebrated running out at Brescia by heading to the cinema to watch 'Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III: Turtles In Time'. Unlikely, though.

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Play-off final highs & lows

The Sky Bet Championship and League Two play-off finals take place this weekend, with Blackpool and Exeter vying for a place in League One on Sunday before Huddersfield take on Reading for a place in the Premier League on Monday.

Since they began in 1987, the end-of-season competition has provided agony and ecstasy in equal measure.

Here the Sports Pink looks at some of those who have experienced the highs and the lows of the play-offs.

HEROES

NEIL WARNOCK

Love him or hate him, he cannot be ignored - and neither can his record in play-off finals. Warnock won four in the 1990s and no manager can boast a better record.

Back-to-back Wembley wins against Tranmere and Brighton saw Warnock take Notts County into the top flight in 1991 with successive promotions and he was at it again in 1995 and 1996 as he took Huddersfield into the second tier and Plymouth up to the third tier respectively.

BOBBY ZAMORA



Neil Warnock

Like Warnock, Zamora has been there and got the t-shirt on more than one occasion, scoring the only goal in 1-0 wins to get West Ham and then QPR promoted to the Premier League.

Zamora struck at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium as the Hammers defeated Preston in 2005 and then nine years later he netted a superb injury-time effort to break Derby's hearts as 10-man QPR returned to the big time with the ultimate smash-and-grab victory at Wembley.

ALEX REVELL AND ADAM COLLIN

Hard to imagine now given their current plight, but just three years ago Leyton Orient were on the brink of promotion to the Championship after goals from Moses Odubajo and Dean Cox had them 2-0 up at half-time, before an Alex Revell-inspired comeback for Rotherham.

Revell pulled a goal back after 55 minutes before scoring arguably one of Wembley's greatest ever goals five minutes later - a stunning 35-yard dipping volley.

The match went to penalties where Rotherham goalkeeper Adam Collin saved two spot kicks as his side won 4-3.

Continued on facing page

PINK

Swift return to

Wendy Gee



SERIAL Chelsea loanee John Swift is on the brink of completing an alternative route into the Premier League.

Turning his back on the Stamford Bridge high life can't have been easy for a young man who, not so long ago, was playing for Totton-based Pace Youth in the Southampton Tyro League.

But after loan spells with Rotherham, Swindon and Brentford, the 21-year-old midfielder with an eye for goal felt ready to ditch the Fulham Road bright lights for a club he could call his own.

Now, less than 12 months after penning a three-year deal with Jaap Stam's Reading, he stands just one game away from the Premier League promised land.

Victory in Monday's winner-takes-all Championship play-off final against Huddersfield Town at Wembley (3pm) would make the bold decision to part company with Chelsea one of the wisest of his fledgling career.

Swift's Southampton-based agent Barry Wilson said: "John had three different contracts offered by Chelsea. If they think there's talent there, they'll try and keep hold of it."

"But being a loan player is very different from being a signed player and John made the very tough and brave decision to break away."

"He had to say thanks very much to Chelsea for the education they had given them, go away and play at a smaller level. Hopefully he'll then come back and play for one of the top five or six clubs - maybe even Chelsea again one day."

Target

"For John, the target has always been to play in the Premier League. Ultimately it's where he can play his best football."

"Hopefully Reading will go up and he can push forward in his career."

"It's better than he would have done if he'd stayed at Chelsea and kept going out on loan."

Swift, back in Hampshire this week visiting his old school Brune Park in Gosport and meeting up with a couple of Reading fans in Hedge End, reckons he made exactly the right move joining the Royals.

"I could have stayed at Chelsea, but I didn't want to go out on loan again, so I decided not to sign a contract. I felt it best for my career to get first-team football else-

John Swift, centre, celebrates after one of his nine Reading goals.



John Swift takes a penalty for Reading during the 2016/17 season.

where," he said. "I wanted to sign for a team and do well for myself."

After a bright beginning with the Royals, Swift rolled his ankle playing for England U21s against Italy at St Mary's last November and spent around six weeks sidelined with damaged ligaments.

He returned to action on Boxing Day and rapidly made up for lost time.

Having won the EFL young player-of-the-month award for January, he marked his first full season as a Championship player by being nominated for the EFL young player-of-the-year.

A refreshingly modest and grounded young man, Swift recalled: "Coming back from injury, I had to get up to speed and fight my way in again."

"I got the award for January because I was getting on the end of things and scoring, but it took a while to get my performances up to scratch."

"I'm still young and I can always get better."

In former Manchester United defender Stam, Swift has found the ideal mentor.

The Dutch master is a man of few words, but he is excellent at getting his message across.

When Stam took over at the Madejski Stadium last summer, Reading had just finished an underwhelming 17th in the Championship.

This season they came third before eclipsing Fulham 2-1 on aggregate in the play-off semi-final.

"I get on really well with the manager," said Swift. "He doesn't talk much, but when we do tactics or anything to do with training, he makes sure we're all switched on."

"He isn't going to shout at you if you make a mistake. He's all about showing you how to improve and making you a better player."

A former Ajax man, Stam's footballing ethos was key to steering Swift in Reading's direction.

Swift made his name at Chelsea

PINK

the top flight?



as an energetic box-to-box player in the Frank Lampard mould.

These days he classifies himself as more of an attacking midfielder.

"He (Stam) wants to play football and that suits my game really well," he said.

"At the beginning of the season people doubted whether we'd be able to carry on playing like that because teams would clock you and stop you playing.

"There are certain games when it's not coming off that we have to change things up and play a dif-

ferent way.

"If we're in trouble, we have the option of an out-ball up to Yann (Kermorgant, six-foot frontman) and he holds it up or flicks it on.

"I'm more of an attacking midfielder these days. I stay high and look for areas to get on the ball.

"I've got nine goals this season, eight in the league and one in the cup."

Swift will be cheered on by 23 family and friends - including nine of his old mates from Gosport - in a bumper Wembley crowd on Monday.

"It's going to be the biggest game of most of our careers so we're all going to be a bit nervous," he confessed. "But, in another way, it's just another game and we have to go out, do what we've been training for and get the win.

"I've never played at Wembley before. The first time I walked out on the pitch was other day when I went up to have a look around.

"I got there before when I was on loan at Swindon (the League One final v Preston in 2015) but I didn't get into the squad. It was disappointing but I've got the chance to make up for it now."

During his time at Swindon, Swift played in the same side as Saints' Jack Stephens, his England U21 room-mate.

The pair are among the 28 players invited by head coach Aidy Boothroyd to St George's Park next week in the build-up to the UEFA European U21 Championship Finals in Poland (June 16-30).

Should Swift make the cut for the travelling 23, it means he won't get much of a summer off.

But sun, sea and sand can wait for now - particularly if there's Premier League football to look forward to next term.

"I'm friends with Jack Stephens, Matt Targett and James Ward-Prowse and it would be massive for me - and Reading - to join them in Premier League," smiled Swift.

"Just having a year in the Premier League would be amazing and if we managed to stay up - even better."

from facing page

VILLAINS

STEVE SIMONSEN

The Sheffield United goalkeeper looked destined to be the hero of the League One final in 2012 when, after 120 minutes of goalless action, he saved two penalties in the shoot-out as Huddersfield missed their first three spot-kicks.

However, the Blades penalty takers struggled too and the shoot-out went to sudden death. After 10 penalties each, it was 7-7 and down to the goalkeepers. Alex Smithies scored his, before Simonsen blasted the ball over the crossbar.

JAMIE WARD AND LEE HENDRIE

More play-off misery for Sheffield United, this time in the Championship final in 2009.

Former Bashley star Wade Elliott's superb curling effort ended Burnley's 33-year wait for a return to the top flight and any chance the Blades had of mounting a comeback disappeared down the tunnel with Jamie Ward after 79 minutes following his red card for two quick bookings.

To compound the misery Lee Hendrie was also shown a red card after the final whistle for foul and abusive language towards the match officials.

MICHAEL WALLACE AND CHRIS BEAUMONT

Stockport finished 12 points ahead of Burnley in the third tier in 1994 but more crucially the Claretts finished with two more players on the pitch after an ill-tempered clash between the north-west neighbours.

Wallace and Beaumont were sent off before the hour mark and Burnley took full advantage, securing promotion with a 2-1 win.



Steve Simonsen

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NON LEAGUE



Ex-Spitfire Stuart back in Wales

EX-EASTLEIGH striker Stuart Fleetwood has returned to Wales to sign for Merthyr Town.

The 31-year-old started his career with Cardiff City at the age of 12 and went on to play for Hereford United, Forest Green Rovers, Charlton Athletic – where he was signed by former Saints boss Alan Pardew – and Luton Town before joining Eastleigh in 2013.

Since parting company with the Spitfires, the former Wales youth international has played for Sutton United and Bath City and spent last season on loan at Weymouth, scoring 17 league goals for the Terras.

He is now relishing the prospect of helping the Martys build on finishing



Stuart Fleetwood

third in the Southern Premier last term.

Fleetwood said: “This feels like the perfect move and the perfect fit for me.

“I’ve been in contact with Gavin (Williams, Merthyr boss) for a few months and I’m thrilled to be joining a club full of ambition.

“I know how challenging this league can be after spending a season on loan with Weymouth and I’m looking forward to joining up with the rest of the squad in pre-season.”

Manager Williams, whose side suffered play-off semi-final penalty shootout heartbreak against Hitchin Town, added: “Stuart’s experience and talent will be invaluable as we push towards our goals.”

Former Saints and Salisbury striker Kayne McLaggon – who played in the Championship under Mark Wotte – was a regular scorer for Merthyr last term.

Ex-Eastleigh strike pair sign for Sutton



Ross Lafayette

FORMER Eastleigh forwards Ross Lafayette and Moses Emmanuel will be gunning for their old club in the National League this season – this time in the colours of Sutton United.

The attacking duo dovetailed well for Dover Athletic last term and will be back in tandem playing for ex-Spitfires boss Paul Doswell at Gander Green Lane.

Emmanuel, known as Moses Ademola during his Eastleigh days, scored 11 goals in 36 league games for Dover last term and is looking forward to playing regu-

larly on Sutton’s 3G pitch.

“I scored a hat-trick on it last season and I think the surface will suit my style of play,” said the 27-year-old.

Sutton boss Doswell said: “Moses is someone I’ve admired greatly over the years, even more so because he had the most annoying habit of scoring every time he played against us!

“He has enjoyed playing with Ross Lafayette and their understanding will help them both settle very quickly.”

Lafayette, 31, netted 12 times as

a targetman for Dover last season and was offered a new deal by Whites boss Chris Kinnear.

But the former Welling striker said: “Once I knew Paul Doswell was interested in me coming to Sutton, it was a very easy decision to make.

“Listening to the gaffer’s plans for the future and his enthusiasm for the project really made my mind up.”

Defender Aswad Thomas, a one-time Eastleigh trialist, has also moved from Dover to Sutton.

Dolphins on verge of the ‘big time’

Paul
McNamara

OUTGOING Poole Town chairman Clive Robbins says successor Chris Reeves is taking over with the club “on the verge of the big time”.

Robbins, who, along with dad Arthur and former vice-chairman Reeves, rescued the club from liquidation in 1991, is stepping down after 26 years, saying it is time to allow somebody else a crack at the top job.

His remarkable tenure has seen the club promoted from Hampshire League football right up to National South, where they finished fifth last term.

All this has been achieved against the backdrop of Dolphins’ ongoing fight to find a home to call their own after being kicked out of Poole Stadium in 1994.

Now settled in the Black Gold Stadium, which underwent a significant facelift last season, they are poised to continue their rise under boss Tom Killick.

Robbins said: “I have done it long enough and I felt the time was right to give somebody else a crack.

“Chris has been an absolute star, working with me over the 26 years. He was keen to put his own stamp on the club and I had no objections to that.

“It is a poisoned chalice in a way, because we have had so much success and now Chris has to replicate that, which is probably unfair on him because he has been partly responsible for that success anyway.

“We have had many years of



From left – Clive Robbins, Tommy Killick and Chris Reeves

slow reconstruction and Chris is taking over the chairmanship just as we are on the verge of the big time. That will be difficult because the next jump is huge.”

Robbins is convinced Poole would have scaled even greater heights had his gang of three not assumed control with the club in such dire straits.

“It felt like a disaster when we went down to the Hampshire League in 1996,” says Robbins, who will remain a director and shareholder of the club. “But

we had to do that to get back up again. Then we found Tatnam and appointed Tom and those things were the catalysts for our success.

“It is bittersweet, really. If we had put the same effort into, say, Dorchester or Weymouth, then we would be much higher up the ladder than we are. But you play with the cards you are dealt and that was the position we were in at Poole.”

Robbins cites the multiple promotions under Killick as his most treasured memories, his only re-

gret being that dad Arthur was not around to witness his beloved club really take off.

“Those nights of celebration were the highlights,” he says. “And seeing the delight on my dad’s face after a few of the early successes. He was the main architect of keeping the club solvent.

“He died 12 years ago and our success effectively started then, which he would have found quite humorous. He loved the club and he loved the town. I have loved it, too, and I will continue to love it.”

NON LEAGUE



David Gerrard

Ex-Cherries starlet stays with Town

STRIKER David Gerrard is staying put at Southern Premier outfit Dorchester Town.

Having come up through the Magpies' reserve ranks, Gerrard had spells with Folland Sports, Bemerton Heath Harlequins, Gosport Bor-

ough and Bashley before returning to the Avenue Stadium.

It was his 80th-minute goal against Stratford that helped secure a vital point for Dorchester in their battle against relegation.

"David's a good football-

er with a good pedigree and is another player with a great future ahead of him," said Dorchester boss Craig Laird.

"Hopefully we'll see a little bit more from him again this season."

Jerrard, who spent seven years with the AFC

Bournemouth Academy, netted six goals in 41 appearances for the Magpies last term.

Club chairman Matt Lucas said: "He's a player who is only going to progress with some of the players he'll have around him."

Claridge: I'd pay to watch Chris!

Wendy Gee



SALISBURY boss Steve Claridge says new signing Chris Shephard is a player he would "pay to watch".

The winger/attacking midfielder has returned to the Ray Mac as one of two early-summer signings for the Whites.

The 28-year-old former Exeter City man impressed in a couple of loan spells at the old Salisbury City club in 2009 and 2010.

Following his release by the Grecians, he had two seasons at Eastbourne Borough before joining Southern Premier outfit Weymouth where he has spent the last three years.

"I've known about Chris for a while, but I wasn't sure if I would be able to get him, so it's a coup for us," said Claridge, whose side just missed out on promotion from the Southern One South & West last term.

"Chris is one of those players you pay to watch. He's someone who's going to get you off your seat and excite you.

"But he's not just one who only wants to get on the ball. He'll do his work tracking back as well.

Ability

"He's got as much ability as there is around in the south-west and he's brave as well on the ball and willing to take a challenge."

Salisbury's other new arrival, defender Jake Wannell, has also winged his way in from Weymouth.

The versatile 23-year-old is another to have come through the Exeter youth system.

"Jake caught my eye when I went to watch Weymouth a couple of times last season. This is why you get out to games, to see what's



Jake Wannell and, inset, Chris Shephard

out there," Claridge explained.

"Jake is a good size, strong, tall and quick, which is what we were looking for.

"He's decent on the ball as well and we need defenders who are comfortable in possession because of the way I like to play.

"I'm delighted with these signings," added Claridge. "They will

strengthen us and are coming here for the right money within our budget.

"They are both good characters as well and are coming here for the right reasons - they understand what we are trying to achieve."

Salisbury's new duo were both signed for Weymouth by former

boss Jason Matthews.

Speaking about their exits, Terras' assistant manager Paul Maitland explained: "Both players decided to leave the club because, unfortunately, they couldn't commit the time that was involved to be at Weymouth.

"We wish them all the best for the future."

An awards treble for McKechnie

PORTLAND United finally got their hands on the Sydenhams Wessex Premier trophy at the club's end-of-season awards.

In an unconventional conclusion to the 2016/17 campaign, the Islanders were not confirmed as champions until four days after the last ball had been kicked.

Having wound up second, they snatched the crown from Moneyfields' grasp when the Dover Road outfit failed in their FA appeal against a three-point deduction for fielding an ineligible player.

It completed back-to-back Wessex titles for the boys from Grove Corner who, just 12 months earlier, had clinched promotion as Sydenhams One champions.

Ryan McKechnie, who scored what proved to be the title-winning



Portland's champions

goal on the final day of the campaign against Bemerton, was the star of the awards night.

He scooped a hat-trick prizes as leading goalscorer, club player-of-the-year and supporters' player-of-the-season.

Alresford Town-bound defender Ross Carmichael claimed the players' player prize, while Josh Camp was named young player-of-the-year.

Jordan Moore bagged a reserve team double, winning the supporters' player and most improved player awards. Camp took the players' player accolade, Leon Attree was named club player-of-the-year and striker Paul Cole lifted the leading goalscorer's crown.

There was also a special award for reserves' boss Justin Faulkner, named Blues' clubman-of-the-year.

Portland have appointed former Wimborne Town and Hamworthy United manager Simon Browne as title-winning boss Gary Bailey's successor.

NON LEAGUE



PRE-SEASON FRIENDLIES 2017

Saturday, July 1
Salisbury v Portsmouth.

Wednesday, July 5
Folland Sports v Blackfield & Langley

Friday, July 7
Fawley AFC v AFC Totton
Winchester City v Gosport Borough

Saturday, July 8
Eastleigh v AFC Wimbledon (provisional)
Newport IW v Havant & Waterlooville

Tuesday, July 11
AFC Totton v Aldershot Town
Basingstoke Town v Eastleigh (provisional)
Winchester City v Hungerford Town

Wednesday, July 12
Folland Sports v Moneyfields.

Saturday, July 15
Eastleigh v Portsmouth (provisional)
Havant & Waterlooville v Farnborough
Winchester City v Hanwell Town

Tuesday, July 18
AFC Totton v Havant & Waterlooville
Andover Town v Salisbury
Blackfield & Langley v Eastleigh (provisional)
Winchester City v Sholing

Wednesday, July 19
Folland Sports v Gosport Borough.

Saturday, July 22
Bashley v Winchester City XI
Fleet Town v Winchester City XI
Havant & Waterlooville v Sutton Utd

Tuesday, July 25
Blackfield & Langley v Winchester City
Horndean v Havant & Waterlooville

Thursday, July 27
Bemerton HH v AFC Totton

Friday, July 28
Eastleigh v Sheffield Utd (provisional)

Saturday, July 29
Hailsham v Folland Sports
Havant & Waterlooville v Portsmouth
Winchester City v Marlow

Tuesday, August 1
AFC Stoneham v Eastleigh
Hamble Club v Winchester City

Saturday, August 5
Salisbury v Basingstoke Town
Winchester City v Farnborough

Want to publicise your club's pre season friendlies? Email wendy.gee@dailyecho.co.uk

Ex-Saint Wright returns to Sandgrounders



Mark Wright in his Dell days

FORMER Saints, Liverpool and England defender Mark Wright has returned to Vanarama National League North outfit Southport as head of club development.

The role includes assisting the management team in assembling a competitive squad for the forthcoming season and contributing towards Southport's community and commercial initiatives.

Wright, 53, returns to the Merseyrail Community

Stadium having been one of the Sandgrounders' most successful managers, finishing fourth in the Conference (National League) in 2001.

Illustrious

He then won the Conference title at Chester City in 2004 and also had managerial spells with Oxford United and Peterborough United.

During an illustrious playing career he captained England and Liverpool, lifting

the FA Cup in 1992, and made 45 appearances for England, playing in the semi-final of the World Cup at Italia '90 under Bobby Robson.

Wright - a Saint from 1982-87 after joining from then Division 3 club Oxford United - said: "I am delighted to come back. This is an all-embracing role - developing players, working in the community with schools and youngsters - plus bringing more commercial activity to the club."

Pearce up for new Moneys mission

Wendy Gee



FORMER Gosport Borough skipper Sam Pearce is joining Moneyfields for their maiden Southern League voyage.

The seasoned defender ended last season on loan at Farnborough after reaching an agreement with Gosport that his contract would be cancelled by mutual consent.

It marked the end of a hugely successful five-year spell at Privett Park in which Pearce became club captain and community officer and played in the FA Trophy final at Wembley in 2014.

That experience will come in handy for Dave Carter's Moneyfields who will start next season in the Southern One Central Division after gaining promotion as Sydenhams Premier runners-up.

Push

Pearce, who has also played for Havant & Waterlooville, Fleet Town, Bognor Regis and Salisbury, said: "Dave Carter is ambitious to do well in the Southern League and wants to push for the play-offs.

"With the squad he is putting together, I don't think we will be too far away come the end of the season."

● MICHAEL Poke is among six players to have been released by National League outfit Woking.

The Cards have confirmed that the ex-Saints and Eastleigh goalkeeper, along with Zak Ansah, Max Kretschmar, Brian Saah,



Former Eastleigh striker Jack Midson has dropped into the Ryman Premier

Frazer Shaw and Ismail Yakubu, will leave the Surrey club when his current contract expires.

Poke, 31, joined Woking on a one-year deal in July last year

after parting company with Eastleigh.

Having already had a spell on loan with the Spitfires, Staines-born Poke became a permanent

Eastleigh signing in January 2016 following his release by Portsmouth.

Woking are rebuilding under former Saints youth Anthony Limbrick, who succeeded Garry Hill at the Kingfield helm.

● SYDENHAMS Wessex One outfit Whitechurch United are looking for first-team sports therapist or physiotherapist for the upcoming season.

The role is ideal for both experienced candidates or someone recently qualified who is looking to gain further footballing experience.

Third-year university students are welcome to apply.

The role involves covering training sessions and match days and dealing with the treatment of injuries and rehabilitation.

Please email your CV and notes on previous experience to secretary.wufc@gmail.com

● JACK Midson has dropped into the Ryman Premier Division with Leatherhead.

The ex-Eastleigh striker is a former AFC Wimbledon teammate of Sammy Moore, who has succeeded Jimmy Bullard as manager at Fetcham Grove.

Midson, 33, played for Braintree in the National League after being released by Eastleigh last summer and has been persuaded to drop two divisions by his close friend Moore, who will be player/boss of the Tanners.

Midson, a popular player with the Spitfires, is expected back at the Silverlake tomorrow (Sunday, May 28, 3pm) for a players' reunion being organised by club secretary Ray Murphy.

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NON LEAGUE



Family must come first

EASTLEIGH have benefitted from Danny Hollands' desire to move back down south by making him their second summer signing.

The experienced former Portsmouth and AFC Bournemouth midfielder will be linking up with the National League club once his contract with Crewe expires.

Hollands joined Crewe on a five-month deal in August last year which was later extended to the end of the season. He scored once in 29 games for the Alex, taking his career tally of appearances to 442.

Crewe boss Dave Artell had been keen to keep Hollands at the League Two club, but the 31-year-old wanted to move back down to the south coast.

With his wife, Natalie, and a set of five-year-



The Sholing family. Picture: Ray Routledge.

Sholing stars can keep a secret!



Danny Hollands

old triplet girls – Sofia, Annabella and Mia – to look after, Hollands put his family first.

Artell said: "I wanted to keep him because he is the type of character I want at the club, but I also respect that he wants the best for his family."

Hollands started his career at Hampton & Richmond Borough before moving on to Chelsea where he captained the youth team. He then put down roots at AFC Bournemouth, making 219 appearances for the Cherries in a five-year spell between 2006 and 2011. After 94 appearances for Pompey, he left Fratton Park last summer, having turned down the offer of a fresh contract.

Hollands follows Leyton Orient striker Paul McCallum into the Silverlake as Richard Hill and Andy Hessenthaler begin building for the new National League campaign.

Wendy Gee



IN these days of social media, footballing 'secrets' don't stay under wraps for long.

So fair play to the players and staff of Sholing FC for staying hush-hush about the incredible news of their £100,000 super grant from FA sponsors Budweiser.

The story began when manager Dave Diaper was approached by a production company to follow the team and interview players and fans for a documentary about non-League football.

The film crew accompanied the Boatmen to their Sydenhams League Cup final triumph over Baffins Milton Rovers and, just week later, came the most unbelievable news.

Invited to The Robin Hood pub in the heart of Sholing to view the finished film, Sholing were asked to gather in the garden for a team photo.

It was at that point that skipper Byron Mason was called upon to read out a letter from Budweiser.

It contained the jaw-dropping news that the Boatmen had hit the £100,000 super grant jackpot from the Budweiser Club Futures programme. It will go towards upgrading their run-down Universal Stadium home.

The Budweiser film became a TV advert first shown on Sky Sports during the final day of their Premiership coverage. It is now running regularly on TV and being broadcast all over Europe.

"The shock you see when Byron is reading out the news is genuine. The producer had even kept



Fan Micky Travers celebrates the news with Sholing players.

it quiet from the camera crew!" said Diaper.

"After that the lads did brilliantly to stay quiet for two weeks and keep the news away from social media.

"What's happened is beyond our wildest dreams!

"During my 18 years as manager I've always fought for club funding so the boys can get the promotion they deserve and not be held back by our poor facilities.

"We didn't expect such a huge donations and will forever be grateful to Budweiser and the FA for helping make ours – and the community's – footballing dreams come true."

Looking back on that magic moment at The Robin Hood, Diaper

smiled: "The person who's really grown in all this is Byron.

"He wears Sholing on his sleeve and it's great that this club produces people like that.

"The news was a surprise to everyone. You've only got to see the look on (supporter) Micky Travis's face, he had tears in his eyes."

Sholing – Wessex League/FA Vase double winners of 2013/14 – have twice had spells in the Southern League but have constantly been held back by poor facilities.

They already have planning permission for a new changing facility/clubhouse room and the Budweiser grant will help stir those plans into action.

"We still have a few hurdles to

get over to get what we want, but at least we're halfway down the track now," smiled Diaper.

"We need to capitalise on this now and we're looking to appoint a commercial manager in the next couple of weeks to create a bit of income for the club.

"It's all about sustainability. It's no good yo-yoing up and down the leagues, you've got to be able to go up and sustain it. We want to move on and we want to put in for promotion. This grant gives us a window of opportunity to achieve that."

● As the official beer of The Emirates FA Cup, Budweiser set up the Club Futures programme in 2011. To date, the programme, supported by the FA, has invested over £1 million into non-League football.

NON LEAGUE

Bush determined to reach Wessex



Bush Hill with the Hampshire Premier League title

BUSH Hill are determined to secure grants of £80,000 in a bid to bring Sydenhams Wessex League football to the club.

The Southampton-based club walked away with the 2016/17 Hampshire Premier League top flight title – winning it by a huge 18 points.

That came just three years after they had won promotion from the second tier of the HPL, and after finishing fifth in their previous two seasons.

In all, it was the club's 11th title since their formation in 2002 – if you include championships won during their time in the Southampton League, including a record of five successive titles.

Bush, however, will still be playing in the same league next season as their facilities are not good enough for the Wessex.

Bush play their home games at Mansel Park in Millbrook after securing a lease within the play-

Simon Carter



ing fields in 2013 and privately funding the required step 7 facilities.

When asked what lies ahead for the club over the next 5 years, boss Eugene McManus is clearly excited.

"Our ambition has always been to bring step 5 football to the heart of this community," he said. "Historically the area has produced some great footballers who, when reaching senior level, had to go out of the area to play a 'decent' standard of football. That diluted friendships.

"Non league football is too focused on facilities as oppose to abilities and our biggest challenge is to gain funding to meet

the step 5 criteria and progress to Wessex League.

"To do so we will need to secure a massive £83,000 to fund improvements to facilities.

"We have no rich benefactor to gift us that sum, so will seek assistance from the Football Foundation and Sport England along with begging local businesses to assist through sponsorship etc.

"By 2020 we aim to have achieved step 5 status and have teams in all ages of youth football.

"It has been a fantastic journey for the club. However, despite the successes, we are yet to reach our destination and the hard work by all associated to the club will continue until we do."

McManus, pictured, admitted Bush's first two seasons in the HPL top flight were "frustrating."

He explained: "As soon as we

won promotion (in 2014) it was always our intention to win the (top) division.

"The first two seasons were frustrating as we suffered poor commitment levels, often travelling with a bare 11.

"However, it was clear to all the potential of the team.

"We gained a reputation for being the best 'footballing' side in the league.

"We knew at the end of those seasons we had under-achieved – dropping points against so called bankers yet always taking points from the top three teams.

"Hamble Club and Baffins winning promotion(2015/16) made the task a little easier, but they were never our problem.

"Our problem was ourselves and the mindset when our opposition was in the bottom half of the league. That changed this season through drawing on our experience of the previous two years."

Boss search

SYDENHAMS Premier Division club Newport IoW are in the hunt for a new manager.

Boss Andy Sampson and first-team assistant Russ Byrne have left St George's Park hot on the heels of Stewart Shepherd, who had previously stood down from the assistant manager's role.

A club statement said: "The chairman Stuart Ross, the Supporters' Trust and, on behalf of the fans, we would like to thank Andy, Stewart and Russ for the commitment and time they have all given to the club over the years.

"It has been gratefully appreciated and we wish them all the very best for the future."

Sampson's reign at Newport lasted just over two years.

The ex-Cowes Sports boss and former Port player was unveiled at a press conference in April 2015.

His departure came just days after Newport had retained the Isle of Wight Gold Cup with a penalty shoot-out win over Cowes.

Port, who finished 15th in the Sydenhams Premier, last week waved goodbye to young top scorer Connor Kelly who has joined Dave Diaper's Sholing.

● PAUL Doswell's Sutton United have been added to Portsmouth's lists of pre-season friendlies.

The newly-crowned League Two champions will travel to Gander Green Lane on Wednesday, July 12 (7.45pm).

Former Eastleigh boss Doswell led Sutton into the FA Cup big-time last season, eventually losing 2-0 to Arsene Wenger's Arsenal in a live televised fifth round tie.

Paul Cook's Portsmouth already have four friendly dates lined up against local non-League opposition – at Salisbury (Saturday, July 1), Eastleigh (Saturday, July 15), Bognor Regis (Wednesday, July 19) and Havant & Waterlooville (Saturday, July 29).

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End of the road for Rooney?

England's record goalscorer Wayne Rooney has been left out of Gareth Southgate's England squad for the second time in a row, raising questions over his international future.

Here, the Sports Pink assesses the key questions.

How long has it been coming?

Almost as long as Southgate has had his feet under the table. He started Rooney in his first match in charge, against Malta, but was bold enough to drop him days later in Slovenia while still interim boss.

He managed 90 minutes against Scotland next time around, but has not been seen in England colours since, injured prior to the friendly with Spain then overlooked for March's double-header with Germany and Lithuania.

Southgate has never ducked the Rooney issue, but his actions - or at least his selections - speak louder than words.

What has changed?

While Roy Hodgson was willing to accommodate Rooney in midfield just to ensure he made the starting XI and Sam Allardyce appeared in thrall to the skipper in his albeit brief tenure, Southgate has approached the issue with a dispassionate analysis.

Having removed the captaincy from the equation, he determined there were more effective options in attack and at number 10 and has downgraded Rooney accordingly.



Wayne Rooney

Most importantly, though, the Three Lions boss envisions his side playing an athletic, energetic attacking game and that suits younger legs more readily than older heads.

Is there a way back?

Southgate clearly respects Rooney as both a player and a man, stressing the latter point on numerous occasions since taking post. As such he sees no need to make a grandstanding point by calling time publicly on Rooney's career. But given the style of football Southgate appears to favour it seems unlikely he can ever again be a key figure in the team, purely for physical reasons. The best chance would be for him to leave Manchester United and re-establish himself elsewhere. Regular football and a return to top-dog status might inject him with a new lease of life just in time for him to play a supporting role in one last World Cup next summer.

What comes next?

Rooney is expected to be heading for pastures new in the summer and his destination could effectively settle the question of his England career. Everton is his only possible Premier League destination and, if that transpired, he could legitimately set about winning Southgate over at a top-half side. Alternatively, a mooted move to China would be tantamount to retirement. Southgate would likely treat any move outside the top European leagues as the end of the matter. Whether there is room for a farewell appearance is intriguing. It may not be in the English tradition, but Southgate had a front row seat for Lukas Podolski's Germany curtain call in March and may be tempted to make the offer.

SAINTS



How has Saints

Simon Carter



CLAUDE Puel - has he been unlucky at Saints, or has he actually benefitted from a degree of luck?

That is a worthwhile debate to have as we sift through the highs and lows of a remarkable 2016/17 season for Southampton Football Club.

The simple fact of Saints' Premier League season is that they finished eighth.

Puel was the 15th Saints boss - or head coach, if you include Steve Wigley - to take charge of the club in the Premier League era.

Of his 14 predecessors, only one - Ronald Koeman - guided Saints to a higher league position.

Gordon Strachan and Mauricio Pochettino, as featured elsewhere in this edition of the Sports Pink, also finished eighth.

Of Puel's 14 predecessors, only one - Strachan - masterminded a run to the final of a major domestic cup.

And yet that might still not be enough to save Puel from what some would consider a very unlucky axing.

Lest we forget, Strachan took Saints to eighth place and a major cup final in the same season, 2002/03.

As a result, the Scot was held in great esteem by the St Mary's faithful. Fans still look back at his time in charge with fondness.

Pochettino, too, though he failed to cover himself in glory with the manner in which he hurried out of the St Mary's exit door to join Tottenham.

Puel did exactly the same as Strachan, albeit he reached the League Cup final rather than the far more glamorous FA Cup.

And with a bit of luck, he could - perhaps should - have lifted the silverware. And then would we be debating his future as we are now?

Had Manolo Gabbiadini's early goal not been controversially, and wrongly, ruled out by a linesman's flag, Saints might have won at Wembley. Ditto if Oriol Romeu's second half header gone in rather than smack against the woodwork.

But Saints lost to Manchester United and Puel - unlike Strachan and unlike Pochettino - ended his first full season at the club by not being held in high esteem at all.

Supporters' chants aimed at him at St Mary's last Sunday of 'you don't know what you're doing' sadly illustrated that all too clearly.

Saints have finished eighth and reached a major cup final again, but still that is not enough.



Claude Puel.

It was under Strachan, and it was under Pochettino, but not now under Puel.

Expectation levels have changed in 14 years and fans, unlike in 2002/03 and 2013/14, will not look back at 2016/17 with huge amounts of fondness.

Strachan improved Saints' league position. Pochettino did the same. Puel didn't, though he only slipped two places. Two places, but 17 points worse off than Saints managed the previous sea-

son.

This season, Puel's Saints finished eighth with a points total beaten by a Leeds side who finished 15th in 2002/03.

Also this season, Saints finished only six points ahead of the fourth bottom team, Watford.

In 2013/14, Pochettino's Saints had a 20-point gap between themselves and fourth-bottom West Bromwich Albion.

In the same season, Pochettino's men were 23 points adrift of the

top four. This season, under Puel, the gap was 30 points.

Not a huge difference, and certainly not when you consider the quality of Pochettino's squad compared to the one Puel worked with.

But that is only part of the whole story.

In football, it is often said there are no grey areas - you are either progressing or regressing.

Ever since they found themselves in League 1 back in the

SAINTS



boss's luck run?



summer of 2009, Saints have progressed.

They progressed a hell of a long way in a short space of time – seventh in the third division in May 2010 to sixth in the Premier League six years later.

There is a ceiling to how high Saints can progress, and realistically – at current investment levels – they hit it in 2015/16.

Whoever replaced Ronald Koeman was always going to find it a difficult task, perhaps even an

impossible task. After all, Jose Mourinho could only finish sixth this season.

In terms of points won and goals scored, then Puel's Saints were less successful than Pochettino's 2013/14 Saints – and certainly less successful than Koeman's 2015/16 Saints.

That has possibly been Puel's main problem, though.

Not the injuries to key players such as Virgil van Dijk and Charlie Austin, not the lack of goals,

the constant rotation or the negative tactics.

No, none of that.

Perhaps his main problems was the fact he wasn't the passionate Gordon Strachan with his fitness regimes and witty one-liners to the media, he wasn't Mauricio Pochettino, taking Saints from 14th to eighth, and he certainly wasn't Ronald Koeman either.

Claude Puel has been unlucky, of that there is no doubt.

It was his bad luck to come into

St Mary's at the exact time Saints reached the apex of their incredible rise up the leagues.

He was unlucky to have walked into a club he didn't know where expectation levels were far in excess of the squad's capabilities,

He has also been unlucky with injuries, and unlucky with a crammed fixture programme.

He was also unlucky Dusan Tadic and Manolo Gabbiadini didn't convert late season spot-kicks. He didn't ask them to miss.

That is one side of the Puel debate.

The other side suggests he was actually a little bit lucky.

In other seasons – and Leeds in 2002/03 was a case in point – 46 points would have seen Saints finish a lot lower than eighth.

And if Harry Arter hadn't slipped on April Fool's Day, Saints would have suffered the ignominy of losing at home to Cherries and quite possibly finishing below them in the table for the first time since the mid 1950s.

That would have been mightily embarrassing for Saints, and their 'noisy neighbours' would have enjoyed it immensely.

Other clubs have obviously improved, that goes without saying, and the huge sums of money all top flight clubs can pay has levelled the field somewhat.

When a club like Crystal Palace pays almost £30m for a striker, as they did when they signed Christian Benteke last year, then you know the former footballing landscape – the ones Strachan and Pochettino surveyed when they were at St Mary's – has been radically altered.

On paper, Pochettino's team was the best of the three Saints sides that have finished eighth in the Premier League.

Look at the players he could call on – Lambert, a fully-fit and prolific Rodriguez, Lallana, Fonte, Lovren, Shaw, Clyne, Schneiderlin, Wanyama.

How many of those would you put in the Saints team that Puel sent out against Stoke?

But history will show the Frenchman finished in the same position as Pochettino did – and Poch had been given almost half the previous season to lay his foundations as well.

But that is not the complete story and everyone should know it. Puel's side picked up fewer points than Poch's men, so are therefore not as successful.

Yes, Saints finished eighth in 2016/17 – but were nearer the relegation zone than the team who finished immediately above them.

That is not cause for too much celebration in the corridors of power at St Mary's.

Key stats in Monte Carlo

The Formula One circus has parked up in Monte Carlo for the sixth round of the championship.

Here, the Sports Pink takes a look at the key statistics and trivia ahead of Sunday's Monaco Grand Prix.

- Lewis Hamilton is six points behind Sebastian Vettel in the championship race after he recorded his second win of the season in Spain. Hamilton joined only Fernando Alonso and Kimi Raikkonen of the current grid to win on two occasions in Barcelona.

- Hamilton also secured the 12th hat-trick – that of pole position, victory and fastest lap – of his career in Spain. Only Michael Schumacher (22) has managed that on more occasions than Hamilton.

- Hamilton lapped the entire field up to Daniel Ricciardo in third at the Spanish Grand Prix. The last time that happened was the 2008 British Grand Prix, also won by Hamilton.

- The British driver could



Lewis Hamilton

match Ayrton Senna's tally of 65 pole positions here in Monaco this weekend. Schumacher leads the all-time list with 68.

- Hamilton will be joined on the grid in Monaco by his countryman Jenson Button who is back in the sport as he fills Fernando Alonso's vacant McLaren.

- Button's McLaren are the only team yet to record a single point this year after Pascal Wehrlein finished eighth for Sauber in Spain. Alonso however, did secure his first finish of the season after he crossed the line in 12th.

- Track position is crucial in Monaco with the tight street circuit making overtaking virtually impossible. Indeed the 2003 race was one of only four grands prix in which no overtaking moves were recorded. The others were the 2005 US Grand Prix, the 2009 European Grand Prix in Valencia, and this year's grand prix in Russia.

Highlights of the racing week

D-DAY FOR DERBY HOPES

The day of reckoning arrives for Crackman and crew as the Investec Derby highlights a thrilling two days of action on the Epsom Downs. John Gosden's inmate heads the betting following his success in the trial event at the track back in April but there are a legion of challengers from both Aidan O'Brien and Godolphin lining up to take on the favourite. Cliffs Of Moher leads the Ballydoyle squad with O'Brien once again having an embarrassment of riches in the middle-distance field. While that is a familiar scenario to the Coolmore team, Godolphin are something of a surprise package this time around with a handful of contenders to pick from. Throw into the mix the Frankel colt Eminent and you have all the ingredients for another epic event.

RHODODENDRON TO BLOOM?

Much as O'Brien dominates the Derby, his Rhododendron could prove the key to the Investec Oaks following her highly unlucky second in the 1000 Guineas on her return. The trainer has won the last two renewals via Minding and Quality and Rhododendron is many people's idea of the winner this time. However, the likes of Gosden's Enable and Coronet will ensure the Ballydoyle runner is thoroughly tested.

UP FOR THE CUP

Epsom would well turn into an O'Brien benefit as the trainer also holds the whip hand in the Investec Coronation Cup with Seventh Heaven and Highland Reel towards the fore in the betting, while Gosden is again a key mover with Jack Hobbs. O'Brien boasts a record seven wins in this event, but he has been out of luck since St Nicholas Abbey completed his brilliant hat-trick of victories back in 2013.

REDCAR GOING FOR GOLD

Redcar will likely be the focus of attention on Bank Holiday Monday as their card is highlighted by the Zetland Gold Cup. The likes of Gosden, Stoute and Cumani all appear on the recent roll of honour but give special consideration to any Mark Johnston-trained runner as the Middleham handler is chasing a hat-trick of successes this year.

FRENCH FANCY

Chantilly is the place to be on Sunday as Brametot is likely to bid for a Classic double in the Prix du Jockey Club, otherwise known as the French Derby. Jean-Claude Rouget's charge likes to leave it late and just got up in the final stride to deny Le Brivado in the French 2000 Guineas, so a fascinating rematch could be in prospect in the 10-furlong Group One heat.

FIXTURES (FLAT in capitals)

Monday: Cartmel, CHELMSFORD, Huntingdon, LEICESTER, REDCAR, WINDSOR
Tuesday: LEICESTER, LINGFIELD, Newton Abbot, REDCAR, WOLVERHAMPTON
Wednesday: AYR, BEVERLEY, Cartmel, KEMPTON, NOTTINGHAM
Thursday: CHELMSFORD, Ffos Las, HAMILTON, LINGFIELD, NEWCASTLE, WOLVERHAMPTON
Friday: BATH, CATTERICK, DONCASTER, EPSOM (ITV), GOODWOOD, Market Rasen
Saturday: DONCASTER, EPSOM (ITV), Hexham, LINGFIELD, MUSSELBURGH, NEWCASTLE, Worcester
Sunday: Fakenham, Perth

SAINTS

The gr-EIGHT



Simon Carter



THREE seasons, three different managers, one league position.

Gordon Strachan, Mauricio Pochettino and Claude Puel have all now guided Saints to eighth place in the Premier League.

But that by no means tells the whole story...

2002/03

Saints finished eighth – winning 13, drawing 13 and losing 12. They finished with 52 points.

Gordon Strachan's men scored 46 goals and conceded 49.

Saints finished eight points behind the sixth-placed team, and 25 points behind the fourth-placed team.

Saints finished 10 points above the third bottom team, West Ham. The Hammers went down with 42 points, a record for any team demoted from the top flight – and only four less than Saints picked up in 2016/17!

Leeds finished 15th – in other words, sixth bottom – with 47 points. Remarkably, that is one more than Saints finished with in 2016/17.

In games against the top six, Saints produced a thrilling 3-2 home win over Arsenal with a Beattie brace and Agustin Delgado's only league goal for the club.

But Strachan's men were unable to win any of their other 11 games – losing twice to champions Manchester United and Liverpool, drawing twice with Chelsea, and picking up one point against Newcastle and Blackburn.

In all, that was seven points out of a possible 36.

Had Saints not jumped three places on the final day, would the league campaign by so well remembered?

2013/14

Saints again finished eighth – winning 15, drawing 11 and losing 12.

They finished with 56 points. Mauricio Pochettino's side scored 54 goals and conceded 46.

Saints finished 13 points behind the sixth-placed team and 23 points behind the fourth-placed team.

Saints also finished 23 points above the third bottom team, Norwich.

In games against the top six, Saints won 1-0 at Anfield in September (Dejan Lovren scoring) and 2-0 at home to Everton in April, but lost the other two games against the Merseyside men.

Elsewhere, they lost twice to



Chelsea and Tottenham and picked up one point against both Manchester City and Arsenal.

That made it eight points from a possible 36 against the top six.

2016/17

Saints again finished eighth – winning 10, drawing 12 and losing 16.

They finished with 46 points. Claude Puel's side scored 41 goals and conceded 48.

Saints finished 23 points off the sixth placed team, and 30 points off the fourth placed team.

(The previous season, when Saints finished sixth, they were only three points behind fourth-placed Manchester City).

Saints also finished 12 points

above the third bottom team, Hull.

In games against the top six, Saints' record was poor – they didn't win a single game out of 12. They managed two draws with Liverpool and a point against both Manchester clubs. But they lost twice to Chelsea, Tottenham and Arsenal.

That made it just four points

SAINTS



and the good



Main picture – James Beattie celebrates a goal in the 3-2 win against Arsenal in November 2002.
Bottom left – Rickie Lambert scores Saints' penalty winner at West Brom in August 2013.
Below – Maya Yoshida celebrates scoring against Crystal Palace at St Mary's last month.



out of a possible 36 against the top six.

So, what do all those stats tell us?

Goals scored

Puel's men scored the fewest of those three eighth-placed sides – just 41 in 38 games.

Strachan was lucky enough to have James Beattie in his prime in 2002/03 – the striker blasting 23 league goals in the season when he made his senior England debut.

Pochettino was lucky enough to have Jay Rodriguez and Rickie Lambert, two players who made their senior England international debuts in 2013/14.

Rodriguez top scored with 15 league goals, while Lambert scored 13 times.

Even midfielder Adam Lallana weighed in with nine league goals.

In contrast, Puel's top league scorer was Nathan Redmond, with just seven.

Puel's task was not helped by Charlie Austin sustaining a long-

term shoulder injury when he had netted six league goals.

How would Strachan's men have fared in 2002/03 had Beattie missed a huge chunk of the league season, like Austin did?

Goals conceded

Pochettino's 2013/14 side had the best defensive record – conceding just 46 goals.

All three teams were fairly close together, though.

Puel's men only conceded 48 goals, while Strachan's conceded 49.

Back in 2002/03, fans considered the central defensive pairing of Michael Svensson and Claus Lundekvam as among the club's finest ever. In addition, they had England left back Wayne Bridge, Paul Telfer at right back and Finland international keeper Antti Niemi in between the sticks.

Yet that defence still let in more goals – OK, only one – than Puel's side.

And the Frenchman was without talisman Virgil van Dijk for the last 16 league games (as well as the League Cup final – and would Zlatan Ibrahimovic have had as much impact if van Dijk had been marking him?)

In addition, skipper Jose Fonte was absent for the last 18 games after he was sold to West Ham.

Strachan was again lucky with injuries in 2002/03 regarding his first choice centre halves.

So was Pochettino when he paired Dejan Lovren with Fonte for the 2013/14 season.

Puel, in contrast, had to play Maya Yoshida and Jack Stephens together for most of the last four months of 2016/17 (he could have used the experienced Martin Caceres, but strangely the Uruguayan only made a solitary league appearance).

The Frenchman might have had his problems in 2016/17, but defence certainly wasn't his main one – even though Fraser Forster's form dropped compared to his two seasons under Koeman.

Puel could call on the ever dependable Ryan Bertrand at left back, while Cedric's second season at Saints was an improvement on his debut campaign.

Putting pressure on the top six

While Strachan's side finished just 10 points off the top six, they had never looked likely to finish anywhere near it.

They actually jumped three places on the final day, thanks to Michael Svensson's winner in the last league game ever played at Maine Road.

Continued on page 18

Jones – Sam England's missing link

EDDIE Jones has admitted Sam Underhill could be England's missing link – the natural-born openside flanker he feared the nation lacked.

Head coach Jones scoured the country for turnover-hunting sevens in the mould of Australia's David Pocock when he took the England reins in December 2015.

But just when the former Japan boss came up empty on that search, England's 2003 World Cup-winner Richard Hill sent him off to Wales for his long-term solution.

Jones needed little convincing of Underhill's promise after watching him in action for the Ospreys, and now his switch to Bath frees up the 20-year-old for his England debut against the Barbarians on Sunday.

"We were lucky we had Richard Hill as his mentor, that helped," said Jones of Underhill, who combined studying at Cardiff



Eddie Jones.

University with his Ospreys stint.

"I went and visited him every three or four months, just to have a chat with him, just to see where he's up to. I didn't beg him to come back to England because he's got to want to play for England.

"He did and it was just a matter of finding how he could do that in the best way and being respectful to the Ospreys. The Ospreys have been fantastic in this.

"I think I might have said to Richard Hill, 'I can't see any natural sevens in England' and he said, 'well there is'.

"I remember having a meeting with all the underage coaches and we went through all the players that were available and Hilly said, 'well you've got to see this bloke play'. And he was right. "Sam's definitely going to add something to us but he's just starting."

Former Gloucester star Underhill could yet win his first full cap on England's Argentina tour next month.

Gr-eight finishes

from page 17

As a result, Strachan became the first Saints boss to guide the club to a top eight Premier League finish.

Pochettino's men finished 13 points behind the sixth-placed team, while Puel's side were a whopping 23 points adrift of Manchester United in 2016/17.

Yes, the same Manchester United side who had the same amount of home wins as relegated Hull City.

The gap between Saints and United (23 points) was almost double the gap between Puel's men and third-bottom Hull (12 points).

That says an awful lot about the state of the mid table teams in the 2016/17 Premier League ...

Record against the top six

Pochettino's side had the best record, but that is not saying much at all.

His men only collected a meagre eight points out of 36



Gordon Strachan

against the 2013/14 top six - and just one win, at Anfield.

Strachan's men managed a famous win against Arsenal in November 2002, but overall just seven points out of 36.

Puel's side had the worse record of the three, managing just four draws and eight defeats.

Over the course of the three seasons when Saints finished eighth, their record against the top six was this - played 36, won 3, drawn 10, lost 23.

That says a lot, but not much of what it speaks is complimentary to three different Saints teams - two of which are, as mentioned previously, fondly remembered by supporters.

Only under Koeman did Saints ever have a great record against the elite - witness wins against Tottenham, Arsenal, Liverpool and both Manchester clubs in 2015/16. That record made it even harder for Koeman's successor, whoever he was.

SAINTS

It was the best

Mark Staniforth

Here, the Sports Pink looks at how each Premier League club fared in 2016/17 - and what the future might hold.

ARSENAL

This season has been Arsene Wenger's worst since he took charge of the Gunners in 1996. Missing out on the top four for the first time under the Frenchman means Arsenal will have to juggle domestic football with the Europa League. And Claude Puel, who played under Wenger at Monaco in the 1980s, could tell him how difficult that can be. A horror run of form over spring (including a home defeat against Watford and a 3-0 thumping at Crystal Palace) cost them dearly - although Alexis Sanchez enjoyed a great campaign with 24 goals and 10 assists.

What next?

There is a massive elephant in the room as Arsene Wenger's future remains unclear. With boardroom unrest, a failed takeover bid and potential exits for star pair Sanchez and Mesut Ozil, an interesting summer lies ahead.

BOURNEMOUTH

Bournemouth and their promising manager Eddie Howe impressed in overcoming Chelsea recalling Nathan Ake, injuries, and a worrying run of results at the start of 2017 to secure a club record ninth placed finish while playing some fine football. Their biggest challenge if they continue to improve could be managing expectations. After all, few clubs have come as far as the Cherries in recent footballing history - from near the bottom of League 2 in 2010 to the top 10 of the richest football league in the world seven years later.

What next?

Their task now will be to keep hold of their prized assets. Howe is sure to make his way onto managerial short-lists, not least if a vacancy arises in north London, while 16-goal top scorer Josh King and defender Steve Cook could attract interest from bigger clubs.

BURNLEY

It was mission accomplished for Burnley on their top-flight return. The Clarets were the only one of last year's three promoted clubs to avoid relegation, having totted up double figures in home wins. Manchester City (11) only won one more home game than the Clarets, while Burnley won more home matches than Manchester United (8). They also



Chelsea players celebrate with their title win.

won four more than Saints, who finished eight places higher. Defender Michael Keane enhanced his reputation by breaking into the England team while manager Sean Dyche's band of admirers has also grown following survival.

What next?

Burnley must now work out how to do it again next season.

It is unlikely to be plain sailing as Keane is set to leave, possibly to Manchester United, while it is surely only a matter of time before somebody comes knocking on the door for Dyche.

CHELSEA

Chelsea were rejuvenated under Antonio Conte, who won the title

in his first season as head coach. The Blues finished 10th last term as Leicester succeeded them as champions. But N'Golo Kante, Eden Hazard, Diego Costa and others thrived in a fifth Premier League win as their rivals failed to mount a sustained challenge. Costa scored 20 league goals - none of them penalties - while Hazard improved his league goals



SAINTS

of times...



Arsenal manager
Arsene Wenger.



Bournemouth's
Josh King.



Everton's
Romelu Lukaku.



haul from four to 16.

What next?

Will be keen to avoid repeating the mistakes which led to an embarrassing defence of their last Premier League title in 2015/16. Rumours linger over a possible return to Italy for Conte, but he is more likely to be concerned with strengthening his squad, namely securing a return for striker

Romelu Lukaku and a likely £50m swoop for Saints centre half Virgil van Dijk.

CRYSTAL PALACE

Palace will just be relieved to be playing Premier League football next season. After Alan Pardew was sacked with relegation looking increasingly likely, the latest

episode of Sam Allardyce's eventful career led to him coming in and gradually leading them to safety with a fixture to spare. Stunning wins at Stamford Bridge and Anfield certainly helped. Wilfried Zaha's impressive progress was a significant positive in an otherwise disappointing campaign.

What next?

Palace will now be looking to

kick on, but need a new boss after Sam Allardyce's resignation. Their main focus will be strengthening their squad, hopefully turning Liverpool defender Mamadou Sakho's loan deal into a permanent one.

EVERTON

An encouraging first season for Everton under ex-Saint Ronald Koeman, in which their home form was particularly impressive. After this seventh-placed finish – four places higher than in the previous two seasons – it will be interesting to see how Europa League commitments affect the Toffees as they try to keep moving forward next term. The possibility of losing top scorer Romelu Lukaku this summer looks a considerable worry. The Belgian was the top flight's second top scorer with 25 goals.

What next?

The squad could be broken up this summer. They look set to lose Lukaku, with serious doubts over the future of England midfielder Ross Barkley. Could be an interesting summer for Koeman, who will look to bring Wayne Rooney back to Goodison Park.

HULL

The Tigers' latest top-flight adventure was doomed before it began. Failure to invest in new players led to the resignation of Steve Bruce in the summer, and successor Mike Phelan, who had 13 fit senior players on the opening day, was sacked in January. His replacement Marco Silva gave them hope, but back-to-back defeats against Sunderland and Crystal Palace in May proved decisive. The Tigers won as many home games as Manchester United (8), but a dire away record ultimately went against them. Under Silva, they picked up only two points from nine away games – courtesy of goalless draws at Old Trafford and St Mary's.

What next?

Hull are looking for a new manager. Marco Silva could not keep the Tigers up but enhanced his reputation and has been linked with a move to Saints, Palace and Watford.

LEICESTER

The defending champions' rollercoaster ride continued with the sacking of Claudio Ranieri, a battle against relegation and a Champions League quarter-final defeat against Atletico Madrid. The Foxes looked a shadow of the side that won the title last term. Interim boss Craig Shakespeare guided them to mid-table safety following Ranieri's exit, and looks likely to remain. **Continued on page 20**

Rooney's numbers

Wayne Rooney has been left out of the England squad for next month's World Cup qualifier against Scotland and the international friendly in France.

Here, the Sports Pink looks at his career in numbers.

253

His goal tally from 559 appearances for Manchester United, making him the club's all-time leading scorer.

53

International goals makes him the top-scoring England player of all-time.

119

Caps put him second only to Peter Shilton in terms of appearances for England.

198

Rooney's haul of Premier League goals, putting him second behind Alan Shearer (260).

3



Wayne Rooney.

Goals Rooney scored on his United debut, a 6-2 Champions League win over Fenerbahce.

4

His goal tally at Euro 2004.

34

Rooney has twice scored this many goals in a season, in 2009/10 and 2011/12.

72

Goals scored in one season for Liverpool Boys when he was 11 years old.

16

Rooney was 16 years and 360 days old when he netted his first Premier League goal in October 2002 to help Everton beat Arsenal.

17

He remains England's youngest goalscorer having scored against Macedonia in 2003 aged 17 years and 317 days old.

Remarkable

Francesco Totti has confirmed that Sunday's fixture against Genoa will be his last in a Roma shirt.

Here, the Sports Pink takes a look at the remarkable numbers from the 40-year-old's long career at the Stadio Olimpico.

785

Roma's all-time appearances record holder. He is 225 games ahead of team-mate Daniele De Rossi in the charts and 618 of his outings have come in Serie A, where he is one behind Gianluigi Buffon and 29 behind Paolo Maldini in the appearances table.

307

Roma's all-time leading goalscorer. Totti is 169 ahead of Roberto Pruzzo, on 138 goals. Totti won the Golden Boot once, in the 2006-07 season, when he hit 26 goals.

250

Most goals for a single club in Serie A. Totti is second in the all-time leading goalscorers' table, 24 behind Silvio Piola. That is also four more than the current Roma squad's combined tally.

58

Caps he won for Italy. Totti netted nine times for his country in eight years before deciding to retire after the World Cup win in 2006.



Francesco Totti

22

Age at which he took the captain's armband for Roma, making him the youngest club captain in Serie A history.

16

Age at which he made his debut for Roma. He was brought on as a substitute in the 2-0 victory at Brescia on March 28, 1993.

11

Most goals scored in the Rome derby. His first came in November 1998, when he equalised with nine minutes left in a 3-3 draw with Lazio, and his last two came in the 2-2 draw in the 2014-15 season where he celebrated his second by taking a selfie on the pitch.

8

Times he has finished as a runner-up in the Serie A title race - in 2001-02, 2003-04, 2005-06, 2006-07, 2007-08, 2009-10, 2013-14 and 2014-15.

3

International trophies he has won with Italy. He won the European Under-21 Championship in 1996, the Mediterranean Games (under-23) in 1997 and the World Cup in 2006.

SAINTS



...and it was the

from page 19

Jamie Vardy ended with 13 league goals, but he was one of many whose form improved following Ranieri's exit.

What next?

Leicester's title defence might have ended in relegation had it not been for Shakespeare's late intervention and he is waiting to find out his fate. With no Champions League football on offer next term, the vultures could start circling for forward duo Riyad Mahrez and Jamie Vardy.

LIVERPOOL

Liverpool's top-four finish secured Champions League football for only the second time in the last eight seasons and ensured the campaign finished on a successful note. Although an unexpected title challenge faded away around the turn of the year because of indifferent results against lower-half teams, there were more positives than negatives. Ex-Saint Sadio Mane scored 13 league goals before being injured in early April, while Brazilian Philippe Coutinho equalled Mane's tally with a last-day free kick against Middlesbrough.

What next?

After a Europe-free season, Liverpool must now build a squad capable of coping with the demands of Premier League and Champions League football. A new goalkeeper is a priority, along with a striker, while keeping Coutinho is a must.

MANCHESTER CITY

Pep Guardiola's arrival promised more than City delivered. Scrapping to make the top four, exiting the Champions League at the last-16 stage (compared to a semi final spot the previous season) and failing to win silverware made for an underwhelming campaign. Good attacking play was undermined by defensive, especially goalkeeping, frailties and a lack of a cutting edge, Sergio Aguero excepted. Aguero ended the season with 33 league and cup goals - 20 of them in the league.

What next?

Guardiola did not enjoy the ideal start to life in English football and he will be expected to fare better next season. There are issues hanging over several players, including Yaya Toure and Aguero, and also goalkeeper Joe Hart, who will return from a loan spell in Italy. Money is likely to be spent in excess during the summer. In fairness, it was last summer as well - over £140m.

MANCHESTER UNITED

Promise has been outweighed by frustration during Jose Mourinho's first league campaign in



Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola.

the Old Trafford hotseat. Despite going on a 25-match unbeaten run, too many were draws and United stumbled home sixth - lower than the previous season under the much criticised Louis van Gaal. Were lucky to beat Saints in the League Cup final.

What next?

A win against Ajax would see a return to the Champions League and boss Jose Mourinho can then get on with signing some of the top names in European football, with Antoine Griezmann, Kylian

Mbappe and Ederson all linked.

United must work out how to handle a likely exit for record scorer Wayne Rooney, while David De Gea's future is also a hot topic.

MIDDLESBROUGH

A win and two draws in their first three games got promoted Middlesbrough off to an encouraging start, but it proved to be a spectacularly false dawn. Head coach Aitor Karanka left amid a run of 16 games without a win

between December and April and they were relegated with two fixtures to spare.

What next?

Owner Steve Gibson has hinted that Middlesbrough will not be afraid to splash the cash next season in a bid to bounce back from relegation. First they must find a manager. It is unlikely to be caretaker Steve Agnew, with Ryan Giggs reportedly on the short-list.

SAINTS

SAINTS



worst of times



Tottenham
Hotspur's
Harry Kane



Manchester
United manager
Jose Mourinho

Saints reached the EFL Cup final, beat Inter Milan in the Europa League and ended a fourth successive top-flight campaign in the top half for the first time in their history, yet there is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction. Some fans - and players - have not been won over by manager Claude Puel, who could well be replaced after just one season at St Mary's. A season of 'what if?'

What next?

Puel will be wondering if he will make it through the summer after

rumours of player unrest dogged the latter part of the season. The Saints also have a battle on their hands to keep Virgil van Dijk.

STOKE

The Potters did not record their first league win until October, but then swiftly lifted themselves out of the relegation zone and never really looked in danger of returning to it. But struggles in attack were a frequent problem - neither Wilfried Bony nor Saido Berahino made much of an impact - and

Mark Hughes' men ended up finishing outside the top half for the first time in four years.

What next?

There is a sense that this could be a big summer for Stoke - and particularly boss Mark Hughes. Working out how to get the best out of Bony or Berahino will be a priority.

SUNDERLAND

After spending four seasons playing with fire, Sunderland's finances were finally burnt. Man-

ager David Moyes' admission just two games in that the debt-ridden club was in a relegation fight proved depressingly accurate as they hurtled out of the division with barely a whimper after a 10-year stay.

What next?

Moyes resigned a day after the season finished, so the club must now find a new boss. Jermain Defoe is also expected to leave, for top-flight football in his case, while the club will do everything they can to hold on to highly-rated young goalkeeper Jordan Pickford.

SWANSEA

A season of turmoil began with an unwelcome takeover deal and saw three different managers at the helm. The combined efforts of Francesco Guidolin and Bob Bradley left Swansea bottom at the halfway stage, but Paul Clement masterminded an impressive recovery as Gylfi Sigurdsson and Fernando Llorente shone.

What next?

Clement will be charged with making sure Swansea do not get into another relegation dogfight. The Englishman is confident he does not need to sell Sigurdsson and Llorente, but their resolve could be tested.

TOTTENHAM

After last season's surprise title challenge, Mauricio Pochettino led his young and talented squad to even greater heights this term, securing a second-place finish - the club's highest since 1963. A barren run last autumn, however, cost Spurs dear in the title race as significant progress once again failed to translate into major trophies. Scoring 13 goals in their last two away games saw them finish as the top flight's leading marksmen - and Harry Kane's seven goals in his last two matches saw him win the Golden Boot again with 29 strikes.

What next?

There are issues for Spurs to address, not least their impending move to Wembley given their dire track record there. Mauricio Pochettino will want funds to bring in his own players and give his squad some much-needed strength in depth, while he must hope the club is not tempted to cash in on their top young stars. There could be some exits, notably Kyle Walker.

WATFORD

On the face of it, Watford enjoyed a solid campaign until another late-season slump once 40 points were secured. Yet something was not quite right.

Continued on page 22

Top goals

Wayne Rooney, England's all-time record scorer with 53 goals, has been left out of Gareth Southgate's squad for the forthcoming games with Scotland and France, perhaps signalling that his time as an international player is coming to an end.

Here, the Sports Pink looks at five of Rooney's most memorable goals for his country.

England 2 Denmark 3 (November 16, 2003)

Rooney, then an 18-year-old Everton player, gave Manchester United fans a glimpse of his potential with a fine striker against the Danes at Old Trafford. The striker burst from the halfway line, took advantage of a fortuitous deflection off a Denmark player, before thundering a shot in off the underside of the crossbar from 20 yards.

Croatia 2 England 4 (June 21, 2004)

England needed just a draw to qualify for the second round at the European Championships, but they went behind to Niko Kovac's early strike. Paul Scholes equalised and Rooney then swung the game beyond Croatia with a 25-yard drive.



Wayne Rooney

England 3 Argentina 2 (November 12, 2005)

Rooney was the best player on the park in what was one of the most fiercely-contested and enthralling friendlies in living memory. The then 20-year-old harassed the Argentina defence all night and got the goal he deserved in the 38th minute when he latched on to David Beckham's flick-on and slotted the ball into the corner to equalise Hernan Crespo's opener.

England 1 Ukraine 0 (June 19, 2012)

After sitting out the first two matches of Euro 2012 due to suspension, Rooney delivered on his return, bundling home at the back post to send England through to the second round.

Brazil 2 England 2 (June 2, 2013)

England were given the honour of being the first national team to visit the newly-rebuilt Maracana in Rio de Janeiro and Rooney scored a goal worthy of the occasion. With the score at 1-1, Rooney picked the ball up in the Brazil half and strolled towards goal before unleashing a 25-yard drive that flew right into the top corner.

Club by club guide

from page 21

Departing boss Walter Mazzarri can point to a crippling injury list, but memorable wins over Manchester United and Arsenal were in stark contrast to lacklustre displays against mediocre sides. They ended the season with six successive losses – the joint worst losing run in the top flight in 2016/17.

What next?

Keeping Watford out of a relegation battle was not enough to save Mazzarri from the chop, so the Hornets' annual search for a new manager will begin in earnest.

WEST BROM

Albion have overachieved given their small squad and the issue of Saido Berahino, who had served a drugs ban before being sold to Stoke in January.

They tailed off after reaching 40 points – though they still finished 10th after picking up just two points from their last nine matches, including four 1-0 home losses – but that could play into boss Tony Pulis' hands when he talks to the owners ahead of next season given he will be able to show the deficiencies which need fixing.

What next?

Pulis will be hoping for significant funds to help push the club on. A striker, a winger and two full-backs could well be on Pulis' shopping list.

Continued on facing page

SAINTS



'Saints could do



CLAUDE Puel continues to divide opinion amongst Saints fans.

He was subjected to more boos from some fans during and after last Sunday's home loss to Stoke City.

But he still has the support of some of the St Mary's faithful who believe he deserves to carry on as manager.

After all, Saints did finish eighth in the Premier League and got to the League Cup final.

Saints fans have been debating Puel's future on the Daily Echo website and the paper's Facebook Saints page this week.

Here are a selection of comments from the Facebook site. Log on now to have your say.

● Another top 10 finish and a first major cup final since 76? We finished 8th - we were never going to improve on 6th from last season! Yes performances haven't been great lately but another great season! Give him a chance!

I do think 4-3-3 doesn't suit us - when we moved to 4-2-3-1 we were amazing - so a change of formation and a few quality additions and we will be ok!

Puel should stay!

Michael Dear

● I've always been in the Puel in camp, but I've now voted 'out'. I like the bloke, I'd have plenty of time for him, but 8th place is just a mask. The reality is we were 6 points away from 17th, and that is a massive step backwards. My heart says keep him as he's only had one season, and it hasn't been a bad season at all in terms of achievements, but my head says think about what happened to Everton under Martinez (a man who wanted to play lots of possession football too). My only gripe is be careful what you wish for, because we could do much, much worse than Puel. He certainly hasn't been given the credit for the things he has achieved, so though I'd vote to replace him, I wouldn't be as unhappy as most if he stayed.

Richard Kitchen

● I can think of many reason for him to go but can't think of a reason for him to stay. What we should ask is has he learned by his mistakes? Has he progressed through the season and learned about what is needed to be a successful premier manager?

If he stays then will next year be the same old same old because if so even more fans will join the Puel out bandwagon. I am the same as others - finished 8th or 6 points from 17th... This club has great supporters, we need a manager we can get behind and I'm afraid Puel is not that manager. Puel out!!!!

Dean Bailey



Southampton manager Claude Puel during the Premier League match at Anfield, Liverpool. PRESS ASSOCIATION Photo. Picture date: Sunday May 7, 2017. See PA story SOCCER

● When you consider that we've played a majority of the season without key players on top of those sold and have had to use a lot of academy players throughout (who have all played exceptionally) we've played more games in total this season than I can ever remember.

There have been a number

of games where we have outplayed the opposition and been thwarted by world-class defending/saves that on any other day would've been an easy 3 points.

Every single team above us have a vastly superior availability to spend on players wages etc.

I admit at times we've been

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SAINTS



worse than Puel'



Club by club guide

From facing page

WEST HAM

A tough season played to a backdrop of crowd unrest at the former Olympic Stadium. Slaven Bilic's summer signings were disappointing, to say the least, with Italy striker Simone Zaza the biggest flop. Dimitri Payet's sulk and subsequent departure did not help, but, amidst all this, relegation was never really an issue.

What next?

Will be keen for home comforts next season. Bilic will hope he sees cash to help get his side back into the top half and will also be keen to keep Michail Antonio.

Prem stats

A 13-game winning streak which started in October helped Chelsea claim the league title in Antonio Conte's first campaign at the helm.

The single-season sequence of victories was the joint longest in the division's history, matching the run Arsenal went on in 2002.

N'Golo Kante became the first outfield player to win successive Premier League titles with different clubs by earning medals at Leicester then Chelsea.

Former Leeds and Manchester United forward Eric Cantona was the last outfield player to do so in 1992 and then 1993, which was the Premier League's inaugural season.

woeful and lacked the final ball and substitutions.

But when you look at some of the best managers the league have had, they've all taken at least a season to learn the premier league.

So based on those facts I'd give him one more season, but if the season starts as it finished he'd have to go.

Darren Browning

● Never like to see a manager go (Branfoot not included) but we have gone backwards this season and I don't agree with changing the team all the time, how can you get used to playing together as a team? The final was a bonus for sure but not getting further in Europe and poor league form all season is not good enough.

Steve Johnson

Continued over page

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Hamilton's unlucky 13th

LEWIS Hamilton is set to start a lowly 13th for the Monaco Grand Prix following a disastrous display in qualifying on Saturday as Ferrari's Kimi Raikkonen claimed pole position.

Hamilton has struggled for pace all weekend in Monte Carlo, but his failure to progress to the top-10 shootout will come as an almighty shock to Hamilton and his Mercedes team.

Raikkonen secured the number one spot – his first in nearly a decade – after seeing off the challenge from Hamilton's championship rival Sebastian Vettel by just 0.043 seconds as Ferrari sealed a front-row lockout. Hamilton's Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas lines up in third.

An impressive Jenson Button posted the ninth best time on his return to Formula One action, but he will start from the very back after he was dealt a 15-place grid penalty following a series of changes to his Honda engine.

Hamilton, 32, arrived in



Lewis Hamilton.

Monaco bidding to join childhood hero Ayrton Senna on 65 poles – 30 years after the Brazilian secured his first of a record six wins here – but after going fastest in opening practice on Friday, Hamilton has slid back down the order, and his erratic display in qualifying was that of a man struggling for confidence.

Hamilton endured two hairy moments where he almost collided with the barriers, first at Massenet and then at Mirabeau, before he claimed something was not right with his Mercedes car.

And the Briton's last-gasp attempt to make it into Q3 was destroyed when Stoffel Vandoorne lost control of his McLaren and crashed into the wall at the swimming pool chicane.

Hamilton had to slow right down, and with the allocated time over, the Briton was left with no option but to pull into the pits. He qualified 14th, 1.8 seconds off the pace, but will be bumped up one spot following Button's penalty.

SAINTS

'Puel is not "the right man" for us'

From page 23

● While it's not fair to directly compare Puel to Poch/Koe (they were generally getting 14 players ready to play once a week whereas Puel was preparing 20-22 to play twice a week for the majority of the season, due to Europa/Cup run). We have seen since the cup final that we can't score at home, are inconsistent, and the players seemingly don't want to play for him.

We are less than the sum of our parts and under Poch/Koe we were always more, they pushed us to be better, and Puel doesn't.

There are better managers out there than him (within our price range) and even though we finished a respectable 8th and could have won the cup if not for poor officiating, he is not the 'the right man' for us.

Lau Labs

● We scored 3 goals in only 3 home games this season, so we only managed 8 goals in the remaining 16 home league matches. Not good enough. Last game of the season at home why didn't he play Austin and Gabbo up front. Even when we went a goal behind he takes JWP off and puts on a full back and continues to play with one up front. Not the saints style, that why he needs to go.

Trevor Selby

● Whilst many Saints fans are critical of fans like myself for wanting Claude Puel out, the facts are simple. Yes 8th place finish is very respectable, Positives are that it's a great achievement to finish top half for four years running, making a major cup final .. negatives are Saints have only won 6 home games out of 19 at home, and scored 17 goals in 19 home games, that is simply not good enough to myself as a Saints fan, neither is watching a manager churn out the same excuses, week after week blaming everybody but himself, making poor team selections, poor subs, as well as playing boring slow paced negative football is not the Southampton way. (Les Reed and the board have to shoulder the blame), finishing 6 points above 17th placed Watford and 16 points behind Everton is clearly a backward step for Saints. That is why Claude Puel is under pressure and why many like myself, want him sacked. It's not good enough.

Gary Clark

● He has to go, mainly for our



shocking home form. I was a so called 'happy clapper' earlier this year because I desperately wanted him to do well. I don't want us to become a sacking club but look at the home stats. Just 17 PL goals in 19 games, the 5-0 FA Cup mauling by Arsenal seems to have been forgotten by some. Also the rumours about certain players being unhappy has set alarm bells ringing. Once you hear about the murmurings of discontent that's surely the beginning of the end for Puel. His replacement should be somebody who excites us supporters and can persuade our best players to play.

Daniel Stant

now is the right time for a change.
Stuart Haigh

● Let's not forget how dejected the players look. The players are not playing for the manager. By the looks of things they are disillusioned by the rotation policy and backwards football. The brand of football we saw under Poch and Koeman has disappeared, which has more than likely filtered to the u23's and younger teams. 8th has sugar coated poor performances, lack of fight and unity amongst the team. Puel needs to go so we can get someone who will bring back the football we have seen the past 4 seasons before this one.

Michael Leigh

● I do not like to see managers relieved of their position, but now feel that the time has come for a change to be made. The lack of goals and team management decisions

has resulted in a complete lack of enthusiasm from CP and EB which I believe has caused a lack of commitment from the players. I hope that a change of manager will go a long way to improving the squad.

Brian Dean

● Stay! Saints should invest in their managers and build the club to the top flight again. Changing managers (whoever they are) is always 2 steps back, one step forward.

Tim Watson

● 8th is a fake position, a loss here and a win over there and we would have been in a relegation fight, besides didn't like the way we played, no confidence in Puel ... I am afraid I am voting OUT.

Aboubaker Lasebae

● I used to be in the Puel out brigade. However, with a manager who has had to deal with the exit of major star names leaving and then cope in a Europa campaign as well as taking us to a major cup final, whilst finishing in a respectable 8th he deserves a chance next season. If he's still flop early season then say bye bye Claude!

Lee Maton

● In, no question. Us saints don't do the dirty on our managers, although they have been known to do the dirty on us. Give him a chance, he's only had 1 season and a very difficult one at that.



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Eventful for Moyes

David Moyes' brief spell as Sunderland manager was nothing if not eventful as luck and good judgement eluded him in equal measure.

Here, Damian Spellman takes a look at the controversies which haunted Moyes during his 10 months on Wearside.

TOO HONEST FOR HIS OWN GOOD?

The Premier League season was just two games old when Moyes admitted the club was in a relegation fight following a 2-1 home defeat by derby rivals Middlesbrough. He was not wrong, but he perhaps should have kept it to himself at that stage.

NEW YORK BLUES

Moyes hoped a mid-season trip to New York might help to bond his squad together for the tests which lay ahead. However, the break proved a public relations disaster as angry fans viewed it as



David Moyes

a reward for failure which ultimately made little tangible difference to a squad lacking the required quality to survive in the top flight.

TRANSFER TROUBLES

The manager let it be known within months of his arrival that the job he had been sold was not the one into which he had walked with the club's parlous financial situation precluding the kind of investment for which he had hoped.

He spent heavily on Papy Djilobodji, Didier Ndong, Paddy McNair and Donald Love, but was then reduced to raking around the bargain basement for the likes of Victor Anichebe and Steven Pienaar, and even the proceeds of Patrick van Aanholt's big-money January move to Crystal Palace saw only Bryan Oviedo and Darron Gibson added to the mix.

Continued on facing page

PINK

CHERRIES FOOTBALL

Courage in face of

Paul
McNamara

COURAGE in the face of adversity. This intangible, yet priceless quality has underpinned Cherries' astonishing growth under Eddie Howe.

Right back to when 'Eddie had a dream, on minus 17,' as the fans' song has it, the entire club has been imbued with a definite mental resolve.

It isn't a characteristic that necessarily results in instant gratification. But, in terms of the long game, it will generally see you right.

Asked for an occasion during this past season that best exemplified Cherries' resilience you'd probably plump for December's outrageous comeback victory over Liverpool.

Certainly, 3-1 down with 14 minutes to play, Howe's men seemed to be drowning under the Merseysiders' aggressive, skilful onslaught.

Ryan Fraser's goal saw Cherries come up gasping for air, though – and announced the Scot's arrival as a bona fide Premier League winger, to boot.

The rest is already inscribed in club legend: Steve Cook's sumptuous finish levelled the contest and Nathan Ake gave his accomplished loan stay its headline moment by ramming home a stoppage-time winner.

Broader context

Viewed in a broader context, however, Cherries' plight against Liverpool was hardly catastrophic. They went into the match in handy form and the season was relatively young.

What's more, losing at home to Jurgen Klopp's team isn't the type of blow to inflict deep-seated scars. Liverpool, remember, won at Chelsea, Arsenal and Everton this season.

Fast forward two months from that barmy Sunday at Vitality Stadium and Howe's team were taking on the Reds' city rivals, Everton.

In the intervening period they had won two of nine Premier League matches, collecting eight points in all.

Not a slump of fatal proportions by any means, but things were trending in the wrong direction.

A chastening FA Cup exit at League One Millwall added to the sense of Cherries being mired in a sticky patch.

And any match preview at the time was not complete without mention of exactly how often the team was conceding three goals –



eight times in 12 matches ahead of the trip to Goodison Park on February 4.

Oh, and striker Callum Wilson had suffered a season-ending knee injury days before the game.

Everton led inside 30 seconds and Cherries were three down after half-an-hour. Make no mistake, this was in danger of becoming a right old shellacking.



But Howe made two half-time changes – and, once more, in the most trying of circumstances, Cherries showed their mettle. Joshua King scored twice to scare the life out of Everton and the formerly euphoric locals.

They were painfully close to hauling themselves level before the home team ultimately pulled away to win 6-3.

PINK CHERRIES FOOTBALL

adversity



Smells like team spirit – Josh King celebrates a goal against West Ham with Eddie Howe.

No matter, by stubbornly, bravely refusing to chuck in the towel, Cherries had struck a light back under their season, even if it didn't immediately ignite.

King making a decent fist of the striking role was a boon, too.

This narrative will have rung a bell with all those who lived and breathed the club's first Premier League season.

Howe's side went to St Mary's in the 11th game of that campaign, having won two of the first 10 and let in five goals in both their previous two matches.

Saints stormed into a 2-0 half-time lead and anybody watching a one-sided game unfold would have been tempted to write off Cherries as certainties for the drop.

But Howe made two substitutions and Cherries were transformed, albeit the scoreline remained unaltered.

They actually lost the following week, unluckily against Newcastle. But the die had been cast at St Mary's and Howe's team was soon embarking on a six-match unbeaten run.

Back to this season and it was



Steve Cook scores for Cherries in the win over Liverpool.

Manchester City and West Bromwich dishing out some pretty rough justice to Cherries following the match at Everton.

But their determination to grasp the shoots of recovery planted on Merseyside led to them plucking a precious point from their visit to Manchester United, despite being a man down for the entire second half.

Howe, whey-faced due to the effects of a sickness bug, slung his water bottle to the ground when the full-time whistle sounded on the 1-1 draw at Old Trafford.

If that act spoke of the manager's overwhelming relief, the subsequent 11 matches will surely have left him harbouring an enormous sense of satisfaction.

Cherries have lost only twice – against Chelsea and Tottenham – and soared up the table, all while pulling down the shutters at the back.

The commitment to attack, led by the revitalised King, has remained steadfast.

Howe's men, in fact, were cocking a snook at their doubters as far back as September. The increasingly audible mumblings about 'second-season syndrome' following a winless three-game start were quelled by a 1-0 win over West Bromwich.

Nevertheless, a 4-0 loss at Manchester City, and Championship team Preston's subsequent EFL Cup victory at Vitality Stadium combined to send the naysayers rushing to judgement.

Cherries' delicious riposte came in the shape of a productive four-match spell that featured two performances Howe considered among the campaign's finest: a 1-0 triumph over Everton and the high-octane scoreless draw with Spurs.

Back when Eddie was still dreaming, the en vogue terrace tune of the day included the verse, '17 points, we don't care too much, we're AFC Bournemouth and we're staying up'.

The language, in truth, was a bit fruitier.

Nonetheless, the sentiment was clear – nobody was going to push this club around. That spirit hasn't merely survived Cherries' rise, it has sustained it.

To the point where they are the ninth best team in England.

from facing page

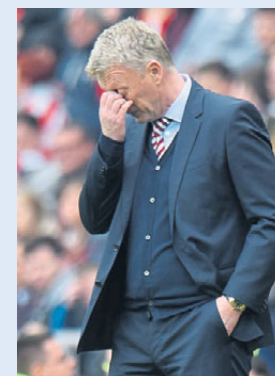
WAHBI WOES

Sam Allardyce's remarkable revival last season was based in part on the return he got from his January swoops for Lamine Kone, Jan Kirchhoff and Wahbi Khazri. Kone's head was turned by Everton's efforts to prise him away from Wearside and Kirchhoff spent more time in the treatment room than on the pitch, but Moyes' aversion to the talented Khazri mystified supporters.

SLAPGATE

Moyes is a manager who is not afraid to make his feelings known and more than one reporter has been fixed in his steely Glaswegian stare after asking a question he did not like. But the 54-year-old crossed the line when he suggested BBC Newcastle and Radio Five Live reporter Vicki Sparks might "get a slap" after he objected to her line of enquiry, landing himself a FA charge in the process.

CASUALTY CHAOS



David Moyes

Moyes could do little about the constant stream of injuries, many of them serious, which depleted his squad throughout the campaign. McNair, Kirchhoff, Lee Cattermole and Duncan Watmore were long-term victims, while Vito Mannone, Fabio Borini and Anichebe also sat out extended periods of a season which was summed up when Kone damaged midfielder George Honeyman's back by falling on top of him in training.

TERRY TORMENT

Sunderland's fans travelled in their numbers to Sunday's finale at Chelsea hoping to see their side at least restore a little pride. But they were astonished – and in many cases appalled – at the sight of keeper Jordan Pickford deliberately kicking the ball into touch after the Black Cats had, Moyes later revealed, agreed to play their part in John Terry's 26th-minute send-off.

SAINTS



Who could replace Moyes?

SUNDERLAND owner Ellis Short has launched the search for a ninth manager in eight-and-a-half years and a sixth in little more than four after David Moyes' exit from the Stadium of Light.

Here, the Sports Pink takes a look at some of the possible contenders.

KEVIN PHILLIPS

Former Sunderland striker Phillips is currently the bookmakers' favourite to replace Moyes. The 43-year-old became a fans' favourite on Wearside during his playing days, firing the Black Cats into the Premier League in 1999 and winning the Golden Boot the season after. Phillips - who spent two years at Saints after a £3.25 move from Sunderland in 2003 - has worked as an assistant coach at Leicester and Derby since hanging up his boots.

NIGEL PEARSON

One-time Saints boss Pearson has been out of the game since October last year, when his brief spell in charge at Derby came to an end in unedifying fashion, just as his time at Leicester had done in June 2015. However, he built his reputation with the Foxes and has been credited with laying the foundation for their remarkable Premier League title charge.



Nigel Pearson

GARRY MONK

Former Saints defender Monk guided Leeds to the brink of the Sky Bet Championship play-offs last season to restore his reputation after his exit from Swansea. He is out of contract next month.

AITOR KARANKA

Spaniard Karanka parted company with Boro in March having seen the bandwagon which took the club into the Premier League at the end of last season stall and start rolling backwards. He is a coach who bases his method on organisation, something Sunderland have patently lacked this season.

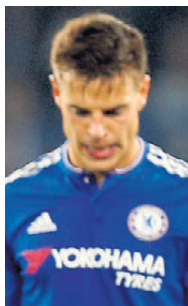
RYAN GIGGS

Former Manchester United assistant Giggs has made no secret of his desire to manage in his own right. He may lack experience, but he would bring back the "Wow!" factor Roy Keane gave the Black Cats during his spell at the Stadium of Light.

SEAN DYCHE

Dyche has been admired on Wearside from afar from some time. However, it may be wishful thinking to suggest he would swap life with Burnley for the Black Cats.

Cesar joins an exclusive 'ever present' club



Cesar Azpilicueta

CESAR Azpilicueta played every minute of Chelsea's Premier League season, only the fourth outfield player to do so in a title-winning campaign.

GARY PALLISTER, MANCHESTER UNITED, 1992-93

The England central defender was an integral figure in partnership with Steve Bruce as United won the competition in its first year after rebranding. Pallister showed perfect timing to score his first goal of the season in stoppage time against Blackburn in the season's penultimate game.

JOHN TERRY, CHELSEA, 2014-15

It took 22 years for anyone to equal

Pallister's achievement as Terry led the Blues to the title, the captain scoring five goals and anchoring a defence which conceded a league-low 32.

WES MORGAN, LEICESTER, 2015-16
Morgan immediately emulated Terry by playing every minute as captain for the surprise champions, forming a strong central defensive partnership with Robert Huth and contributing a vital winning goal against Southampton and an equaliser against Manchester United late in the season.

CESAR AZPILICUETA, CHELSEA, 2016-17
The Spaniard produced consistent displays, mostly after moving from full-back to central

defence as part of Antonio Conte's switch to a back three. "It's something that I'm really proud of," he told Sky Sports 1 afterwards. "I try to be ready always and the manager, from the first day, was confident in me." Like Pallister, Azpilicueta scored his only goal of the season in the penultimate game, against Watford.

GOALKEEPERS

Four keepers have been ever-present in a title-winning season, including Peter Schmeichel with Manchester United in 1992-93 and his son Kasper with Leicester last season. Jens Lehmann, in Arsenal's "Invincible" season of 2003-04, and Joe Hart with Manchester City in 2011-12 are the others.

Moyes fails to 'do a bit of an Everton'

Damien Spellman

DAVID Moyes returned to the Premier League confident he would be able to restore his reputation after Sunderland came calling.

When the Scot took up the reins last July, he saw it as an opportunity to repair the damage wrought by a brief but bruising spell as Manchester United boss, during which he felt he was treated unfairly, and an ill-fated sortie into Spanish football with Real Sociedad.

Having lasted only 10 months at Old Trafford, where Sir Alex Ferguson's shoes proved simply too sizeable to fill, and barely a year in the Basque country, Moyes intended to do for Everton during an 11-year tenure which saw the club transformed from perennial strugglers to top-eight regulars.

The Black Cats were still patting themselves on the back after a fourth successive escape from relegation when his predecessor Sam Allardyce was handed - albeit spectacularly briefly - his dream job as England manager.

Owner Ellis Short thought he had found a like-for-like replacement in Moyes, a man who he revealed had been his "number one managerial target for the last five appointments".

Short said: "The fact that David has committed to a four-year deal is a clear demonstration of his belief in what he can achieve here.

"It is our aim to become a better, stronger and more stable football club and, with a manager of David's calibre and experience at the



David Moyes looks dejected on the touchline during another Premier League boss in 2016/17.

helm, we have a fantastic opportunity to begin looking upwards, rather than downwards every season."

Moyes' remit was relatively modest. His mission was to bring an end to the club's seemingly constant flirtation with the drop and establish them in safer waters, and it was one which was always going to take time.

The Scot said as he took charge: "This has got to be a building job. Hopefully I'm here for four years and I'll try to bring a level of stability to the club.

"This reminds me a little bit of Everton when I took over. Everton had been in the bottom six, I

think, four out of the five years before I came in.

"In my last eight years I never finished outside the top eight. Hopefully we can do a bit of an Everton."

What they did was a bit of a Sunderland.

There were those who believed Moyes was out of his depth at Manchester United, where the support he expected in the transfer market failed to materialise as Champions League and even Europa League football ultimately eluded him.

Life was little easier for him in Spain, and it seemed a good fit when he accepted Short's offer of

employment and the reduced expectation it carried with it.

But as the summer transfer window closed without the arrivals for which he had hoped, he realised very quickly that he might have his work cut out.

Speaking after a 2-1 home defeat by promoted derby rivals Middlesbrough in just the second game of the league campaign, Moyes offered a bleak assessment of what was likely to lie ahead.

Asked what he could say to fans fearing yet another survival scrap, he said: "I think it will be. I don't think you can hide the facts. That will be the case, yes. People will be flat because they are hoping that something is going to dramatically change. It can't dramatically change - it can't."

Slammed as defeatist in some quarters, Moyes' comments proved to be brutally accurate with the club's parlous financial situation, details of which were made public in December, having done little to lift the pall hanging over it.

The Scot, who admitted he might have had second thoughts had he known the full extent of the financial situation, tried to make the best of a bad job, although has struggled to hide his emotions - at one point suggesting he might "slap" a female reporter.

A 4-0 win at Crystal Palace in February was followed by a mid-season break to New York - the team did not score for seven successive Premier League matches on their return and hopes of survival dwindled.

Relegation was confirmed last month - but supporters at the Stadium of Light were calling for the Scot to leave long before his departure was confirmed.

SAINTS



Goals galore on Prem's final day

A record 37 goals were scored on the final day as the Premier League season ended with a bang.

In Saints' case, sadly, it was with a whimper as they failed to score any of those goals.

Here, the Sports Pink takes a look at the highest-scoring finales since the league switched to the 20-team format.

2016-17 - 37

Tottenham's stunning 7-1 victory over already-relegated Hull played a big part in the record being broken on Sunday. Other notable scores included a 5-0 win for Pep Guardiola's Manchester City side away at Watford and champions Chelsea's 5-1 win at home to Sunderland.

2015-16 - 35

(including Manchester United v Bournemouth on the following Tuesday)

A season for the underdog finished with an extraordinary result as relegated Newcastle beat Spurs 5-1. Saints beat Crystal Palace 4-1 while Arsenal's 4-0 win lifted them above Spurs as they finished one place behind champions Leicester. Manchester United's game against Bournemouth, postponed due to the discovery of a dummy bomb left behind following a security training exercise at Old Trafford, finished 3-1 to the hosts.

2012-13 - 36

Sir Alex Ferguson's last match as Manchester United manager was a thrilling 5-5 draw against West Brom. His Premier League-winning side raced into a three-goal lead before they were pegged back to 3-2 just after the break.



Stoke City's Peter Crouch celebrates scoring for Stoke at St Mary's last Sunday.

But with United seemingly coasting at 5-2, Steve Clarke's side somehow managed to level when Romelu Lukaku completed his hat-trick with five minutes to go.

2009-10 - 32

Chelsea humiliated Wigan to secure the Premier League title on the last day. Carlo Ancelotti's side went into the game know-

ing that Manchester United were hot on their heels and produced a wonderful display at Stamford Bridge as Didier Drogba scored a hat-trick in their 8-0 win. Other big results that afternoon included Manchester United's 4-0 home win against Stoke, Arsenal's 4-0 thrashing of Fulham and Burnley's 4-2 win at home against Tottenham.

2007-08 - 34

Mid-table Middlesbrough smashed Sven-Goran Eriksson's Manchester City 8-1 at the Riverside. It was an even game until Richard Dunne gave away a penalty and was sent off. Afonso Alves secured his hat-trick in the last minute while Stewart Downing also bagged two.

Key games in the scrap to avoid relegation

Five key games in the Premier League relegation battle.

April 29: Sunderland 0 Bournemouth 1

Sunderland were put out of their misery when Josh King's 88th-minute winner at the Stadium of Light took Bournemouth past the 40-point mark. The defeat, coupled with Hull's 0-0 draw at Saints, left the Black Cats 13 points adrift of safety with just 12 left to play for.

May 6: Swansea 1 Everton 0

On a crucial weekend for the survival hopefuls, it was Swansea who struck the most effective blow just when they needed it most. Fernando Llorente's header was enough to secure three priceless points against Everton and ease the Swans out of the relegation zone.



Josh King

May 6: Hull 0 Sunderland 2

Given events at the Liberty Stadium, Hull really did not need to suffer an off-day at the KCOM Stadium with Sunderland having only pride left to play for. But Marco Silva's men wilted and goals from Billy Jones and Jermain Defoe left the Tigers in deep trouble.

May 8: Chelsea 3 M'boro 0

Boro ran out at Stamford Bridge two days later knowing defeat by the champions elect would consign them back to the Championship after a single season. Diego Costa, Marcos Alonso and Nemanja Matic struck to send the Teessiders down.

May 13: Sunderland 0 Swansea 2

Hull were left hoping for a favour from the Black Cats as the season reached its penultimate weekend with Sunderland hosting Swansea a day before they headed for Crystal Palace. But David Moyes' men were abject as Llorente and Kyle Naughton clinched a 2-0 win which meant the Tigers' 4-0 defeat proved terminal.

Celtic's incredible Scottish League records



Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers.

Celtic ended Brendan Rodgers' first Ladbrokes Premiership season as manager with a host of Scottish league records.

Here, the Sports Pink rounds up their achievements in numbers.

106

Celtic set a new record points total for the Scottish league. Their 2-0 win over Hearts ensured they finished the campaign on 106 points, beating the previous mark of 103, which was set by Martin O'Neill's Celtic side in 2002.

34

The Hoops secured a record number of

victories in a Scottish league season thanks to their win against Hearts, which took them past the 33-victory total that they achieved in 2001-02. Rangers also won 33 games in both 1991-92 and 1992-93 but had 44 games to do so rather than the 38 of Celtic.

106

Celtic matched their points tally with their haul of goals. Stuart Armstrong's late effort against Hearts took them past the 105 goals scored by O'Neill's side in 2001-02, which was the previous best in the Premier era.

38

Rodgers' side set a new, unbeatable run of games without defeat in a single season. The previous best had been a 32-match unbeaten run, set by O'Neill's Celtic in 2003-04. It was the first unbeaten season in the Scottish top flight since 1899, but the campaign was only 18 games long in those days.

30

The Parkhead side secured the biggest margin of points in Scottish football. Celtic won the league by 30 points from Aberdeen. It beat the 29-point margin which Celtic managed in 2013-14.

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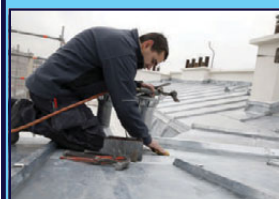
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PINK

Murray form 'no concern – yet...'

ANDY Murray's form is not a cause for great concern yet but that would change if it carried on through Wimbledon, according to the Scot's former coach Mark Petchey.

Murray arrived in Paris for the French Open having won only five matches since February and on the back of a comprehensive loss to Fabio Fognini in his opening round in Rome.

The chances of a repeat this year appear remote but Petchey does not believe it is too late for Murray to click into gear.



Andy Murray.

Petchey, part of ITV's coverage of the French Open, told Press Association Sport: "Obviously it's not what he would have wanted but sometimes in life it doesn't always go smoothly."

"There is a little bit of luck involved and having to play Fognini late at night in Rome was a very tough draw, it couldn't have been worse."

"Andy's always been very good at not getting too high with the highs and too low with the lows and you've got to try and keep it in perspective."

"Some things in his game compared to last year perhaps would be the bigger concern for him, not dominating as much with his forehand, and I think his serve in recent weeks hasn't been as accurate as he would have liked."

"I'm sure those are the things (coaches) Ivan (Lendl) and Jamie (Delgado) will be trying to fine tune."

Paul Gascoigne at 50: A career in numbers



PAUL Gascoigne celebrates his 50th birthday today.

Here, the *Sports Pink* takes a look at his career in numbers.

7

The age of which Gascoigne wrote in his autobiography, "when I had a genuine smile on my face all the time, when I was always happy".

16

His age when he was signed as an apprentice by Newcastle on £25 a week.

466

Senior club appearances made for Newcastle, Tottenham, Lazio, Rangers, Middlesbrough, Everton, Burnley and Gansu Tianma.

110

Goals in club football.

57

Full England caps. He scored ten senior goals for his country.

36

Minutes into his senior international career when he scored his first goal in his third appearance as a substitute in a 5-0 rout of Albania.

15,500,000

The sum total in pounds paid in transfer fees for Gascoigne by Tottenham, Lazio, Rangers and Middlesbrough.

14,000

The cost in pounds of the damage he caused by crashing Middlesbrough's team bus.

The genius of Gazza

Mark Staniforth

AS A footballer, Paul Gascoigne was a one-off – a uniquely talented free spirit who threatened to take the game by storm.

That he did not scale the heights his God-given ability suggested he should was due in part to injury and a complex personality which would not – and seemingly still refuses to – be tamed.

But, as he celebrates his 50th birthday – a milestone many feared he may never reach as his demons repeatedly took control – football can reflect upon a man who more than most embodied the glorious freedom of expression it allows its greatest exponents to demonstrate.

Gascoigne was a man who combined outrageous individual skill with a rare football intelligence to breathtaking effect.

Who could not marvel at the sight of the barrel-chested Geordie carving his way through a mesmerised defence with a deftness of touch, purpose and assurance possessed by only the very best?

There was a poise, too, and a killer instinct. He was no showpony. The tricks and flicks were not just ostentation, but a mouth-watering means to an end.

However, also key to the Gascoigne equation was a more mundane, but equally priceless capacity for industry and a commitment to the team ethic which further enhanced his more poetic qualities.

Fondly described by Bobby – later Sir Bobby – Robson as "daft as a brush", the then England manager knew what a talent he had on his hands and nurtured it to the point that, as the Three Lions went close to emulating their still lone success in 1966 at Italia 90, the 23-year-old to whom he had handed a key role in his team had



Paul Gascoigne

the world at his feet.

Gascoigne had emerged from the ranks at Newcastle as a precocious teenager under World Cup winner Jack Charlton, and swiftly demonstrated that he was more than just a cocky and hyperactive 17-year-old with an eye for mischief.

Charlton took him in hand, ordering a local tea room not to indulge the teenager as he attempted to steer him away from a diet which had previously relied heavily on junk food, and the rewards were pleasing to say the least.

Thrust into the midst of a squad

which included Chris Waddle and Peter Beardsley, he did more than simply keep his head above water.

Gascoigne, like Alan Shearer after him, was adored by those who grew up on the same streets and he in turn revelled in the adulation of his peers.

But, like Waddle and Beardsley, his future was to lie away from Tyneside, with Tottenham paying £2.3 million to take him to north London during the summer of 1988, and Lazio, Rangers, Middlesbrough and Everton all enlisting his services before a career which brought 57 senior England caps

hit its downward slope.

Injuries played a depressingly recurring role in Gascoigne's career, none more so than the cruciate ligament rupture he suffered during the 1991 FA Cup final victory over Nottingham Forest which delayed his move to Lazio by a year.

However, his on-field problems paled into insignificance alongside the the anxieties and excesses which have blighted much of his life.

Gascoigne, who admits to an enduring fear of death, was deeply affected when Steven Spraggon, the younger brother of childhood friend Keith, was killed in a road accident, and he has suffered from an inability to sleep and physical tics for almost as long as he can remember.

He has also been plagued by obsessions and compulsions which have at times led to an over-reliance on prescriptions drugs and, more damagingly, alcohol addiction and briefly, cocaine use – none of which made for an orderly private life which at its nadir and, to his shame, descended into domestic violence.

In many senses, football was his salvation, and its loss as his career ebbed away presented Gascoigne with a new challenge.

In his autobiography, *Gazza, My Story*, he wrote: "But for football, I know I would be in a far worse state than I am today."

It is a frank admission and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Gascoigne, but for the issues which distracted him throughout his career, might have achieved even more on the field.

He wrote: "Let's say I fulfilled my dreams, but I didn't fulfil my potential."

Perhaps he did not, but as he enters his sixth decade, he is remembered as a genuine superstar nonetheless and few would wish him anything less than the contentment for which he has searched in vain for much of his life to date.

PINK

Big Sam: The man with an escape plan



SAM Allardyce opted to leave Crystal Palace on Tuesday after successfully preserving the club's Premier League status.

The 62-year-old, left, who guided the Eagles to 14th after succeeding Alan Pardew in December, has developed a reputation for keeping teams in the top flight.

Here, The Sports Pink looks at some of the great escapes masterminded by Allardyce.

1. Bolton – 2002-03

After leading the Trotters to promotion in 2001, Allardyce enjoyed six seasons with the club in the Premier League. While he recorded consecutive top-eight

finishes in his final four campaigns, the first two years in the top flight were a struggle. Bolton finished four points and two places above the bottom three in 2002 and came within a whisker of going down the next season when a final-day victory over Middlesbrough saw them stay up by two points at the expense of West Ham.

2. Blackburn – 2008-09

Allardyce's next great escape came at Bolton's near-neighbours. He replaced Paul Ince in December 2008 with Rovers second-bottom having won three of 17 league matches. Allardyce made Blackburn hard to beat and results quickly improved as they

defeated Stoke 3-0 in his first game on their way to accruing enough points to comfortably stay in the league.

3. Sunderland – 2015-16

The Black Cats were winless from their opening eight games and had only three points when Allardyce was brought in following the departure of Dick Advocaat. He openly admitted it would be a big challenge to keep the Weariders up and he very nearly failed. Just two points separated Sunderland and relegated north-east rivals Newcastle at the end after the clubs matched each other's impressive end-of-season form by winning three and drawing

three of their final six matches.

4. Crystal Palace – 2016-17

Palace were just one point above the relegation places when the former England boss took over from Alan Pardew two days before Christmas. Things began badly with the London club losing six of their next eight matches, including a potentially costly 4-0 drubbing by relegation rivals Sunderland. Allardyce, however, was once again able to find a solution and secured six victories from the next eight games, including wins over Chelsea, Arsenal and Liverpool, to help finish with a seven-point gap on 17th.

Unique set of talents ...

Paul Gascoigne's unique talent set him apart from the crowd and earned him a place in the pantheon of special footballers bred in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Here, the Sports Pink takes a look at some of the home-grown entertainers alongside whom Gascoigne could rightfully be considered.

GEORGE BEST

For a generation of football supporters, Best was the most naturally gifted man from these islands to pull on a pair of football boots. His ability to bamboozle defenders and the end-product that went with it were priceless to both Manchester United and Northern Ireland, and his premature retirement and subsequent off-field issues were a source of immense sadness.

JIMMY GREAVES

Greaves' career statistics do not tell the full story, but his 491 career goals for clubs Chelsea, Tottenham, AC Milan, West Ham and England - he scored 44 times

Another changing of the guard at Palace...

CRYSTAL Palace are searching for their eighth permanent manager in seven years following the resignation of Sam Allardyce.

Here, the Sports Pink looks at the men who have most recently occupied the Selhurst Park dug-out.

1. George Burley 2010-2011

After administration and a points deduction, Palace scraped Championship survival on the final day of the 2009-10 season under caretaker boss Paul Hart. Hart was overlooked for the permanent position in the summer and former Scotland boss Burley brought in. The appointment was far from a success and Burley was sacked following a 3-0 defeat at Millwall on New Year's Day with the club second bottom on 22 points from 24 games.

2. Dougie Freedman 2011-2012

The ex-Eagles striker, who had been assistant to Burley, was given the job in January 2011 after the club missed out on their first choice, Bournemouth boss Eddie Howe. Under Freedman, Palace survived relegation to the third tier with one game to spare as they ended the campaign in 20th position. He improved slightly in his second season - achieving a 17th-placed finish - before he left the club in October 2012 to take over at recently-relegated Bolton.

3. Ian Holloway 2012-2013

Freedman's decision to depart looked a foolish one in May 2012 when the Trotters missed out on the play-offs and Palace were promoted under his successor. Holloway, who had led Blackpool to the Premier League three seasons earlier, repeated the trick with



Former Saints manager George Burley took up the managerial reins at Crystal Palace in 2010

the Eagles as they beat Watford at Wembley. He perhaps became a victim of his own success the next season, leaving the club by mutual consent in October 2013 after seven defeats from eight in the top flight.

4. Tony Pulis 2013-2014

The former Stoke boss had never been relegated in 21 years as a manager but he was faced with a tough task to preserve that record given Palace's precarious predicament. He quickly turned things around and after 11 victories from 26, which included a five-match winning run in March and April, the Eagles ended the season 11th. He left the club by mutual consent less than 48 hours before the start of the following season.

5. Neil Warnock 2014-2014

Warnock, who had previously left the Palace hot-seat after they slipped into administration in 2010, was brought back in following Pulis' unexpected departure. The much-travelled manager's second spell did not last long, however. He survived for exactly four months and was dismissed following a Boxing Day defeat to Southampton having won only three of his 16 Premier League matches in charge.

6. Alan Pardew 2015-2016

Former Palace player Pardew left Newcastle to return to south-east London with the club struggling in the drop zone. He guided them to their best-ever Premier League finish of 10th in his opening campaign and then led the team to the FA Cup final, where they were beaten by Manchester

United, in his only full season. Pardew was sacked in December last year after eight defeats from 10 left Palace a point and a place above the bottom three.

7. Sam Allardyce 2016-2017

Following his much-publicised departure as England boss, Allardyce had been out of work for three months when he was brought in by the Eagles just before Christmas. He had built a reputation as someone who could keep sides in the top flight and duly delivered with eight victories from 21 - including impressive successes against title-winners Chelsea and Champions League hopefuls Arsenal and Liverpool. Allardyce, whose tenure began with six league defeats from eight, announced his surprise decision to quit on Tuesday.



Gareth Bale

in 57 appearances for his country - illustrate his remarkable potency.

DENIS LAW

Described by none other than Sir Alex Ferguson as "the finest player that Scotland has ever produced", Law was an irrepressible force. He was dubbed 'The King' during his glittering 11-year-stay at Manchester United, where he plundered 237 goals in 404 appearances, although he famously scored the back-heeled effort for rivals Manchester City which helped to send the Red Devils down to Division Two in 1974.

GARETH BALE

Bale's talent was there for all to see when he made the breakthrough as a teenager at Saints - for whom he made his debut in April 2006 as a 16-year-old - and he exploited it to the full to rise to prominence at Tottenham before exploding on to the world stage with Real Madrid. His pace, power, craft and finishing have established him among the biggest names in world football and he has helped to elevate Wales' national team to unprecedented heights.

HANTS CRICKET



Hampshire fixtures 2017

APRIL

2-4 Cardiff MCCU (h) FR
Hants 289 (M Carberry 100, S Ervine 58, L Dawson 45) & 271-6 dec (J Vince 90, T Alsop 52), Cardiff 98 (A Hart 3-17, F Edwards 3-22, B Wheel 3-32) & 110-2.
Drawn
7-10 Yorkshire (a) CC1
Yorkshire 273 (F Edwards 3-58) & 187 (K Abbott 7-41), Hants 141 & 321-6 (J Adams 72, R Rossouw 47, J Vince 44, M Carberry 41). Hants won by 4 wickets
14-17 Middlesex (h) CC1
Middlesex 456 (B Wheel 4-98) & 278-9 (K Abbott 5-59, B Wheel 3-73), Hants 438 (R Rossouw 99, M Carberry 98, K Abbott 56, S Ervine 53). Drawn.
21-24 Yorkshire (h) CC1
Hampshire 455 (J Vince 147, G Berg 99no), Yorkshire 231 (Berg 4-62) & 399-6 (K Abbott 3-65). Drawn
27 Kent (a) 50L
Kent 258 (R Topley 3-65), Hants 260-4 (T Alsop 112no, J Vince 69). Hants won by 6 wickets.
30 Essex (a) 50L
Essex 304-7, Hants 279 (J Vince 68, G Bailey 63). Hants lost by 25 runs.

MAY

3 Middlesex (h) 50L
Middlesex 295 (Gubbins 114, Topley 4-68) beat Hants 146-7 (Bailey 52no) by 89 runs (D/L)
7 Gloucestershire (h) 50L
Hampshire 239-3 (Vince 89*) beat Gloucs 237 (Dawson 3-30) by 7 wickets
10 Somerset (a) 50L
Hampshire 250-6 (Rossouw 156) beat Somerset 249 (Berg 3-44) by 4 wickets
12 Glamorgan (h) 50L
Hampshire 332-6 (Vince 178) lost to Glamorgan 334-7 (Crane 3-69) by 3 wickets
14 Surrey (a) 50L
Hampshire 271-8 (Bailey 145no) lost to Surrey 238-2 by 66 runs (D/L)
17 Sussex (h) 50L
Match abandoned
19-22 Essex (a) CC1
Essex 360 (K Abbott 5-58), Hampshire 115 & 148, Hants lost by an innings and 97 runs.
26-29 Somerset (a) CC1
27 England v South Africa, ODI, Ageas Bowl.

JUNE

2-5 Warwickshire (h) CC1
8-11 South Africa A (h) FR
13 50L QF
16-17 50L SF
19-22 Lancashire (a, tbc) CC1
26-29 Somerset (h) CC1

JULY

3-6 Surrey (a) CC1
7 Glamorgan (a) T20
12 Sussex (a) T20
14 Middlesex (h) T20
20 Sussex (h) T20
21 Essex (a) T20
23 Surrey (h) T20
26 Somerset (a) T20
28 Gloucestershire (a) T20

AUGUST

1 Kent (h) T20
3 Middlesex (Lord's) T20
4 Essex (h) T20
6-9 Lancashire (h) CC1
10 Glamorgan (h) T20
11 Kent (a) T20
18 Somerset (h) T20
22-25 T20 QF

SEPTEMBER

2 T20 Finals Day
5-8 Surrey (h) CC1
12-15 Middlesex (a, tbc) CC1
19-22 Essex (h) CC1
25-28 Warwickshire (a) CC1

Key

CC1 - Specsavers County Championship division one
50L - Royal London One-Day Cup
T20 - Natwest T20 Blast

Hants are second Bess at Taunton



Michael Carberry made 51 today

HAMPSHIRE are trying to defend 258 in the final innings of their Specsavers County Championship match against Somerset at Taunton.

Somerset's 19-year-old off-spinner Dom Bess claimed 7-117 to finish with a match haul of 10-162 in only his fifth first-class appearance as Hampshire were bowled out for 293 in their second innings.

Starting day two on 157-5 in reply to 162, Somerset were all out for 197, with Kyle Abbott (4-49) and

Liam Dawson (4-63) the pick of the visitors' attack.

Hampshire then eased to 84-0 either side of lunch, Michael Carberry making 51, before Bess took a hand, claiming the first five wickets in a collapse to 140-6.

Carberry departed in Bess's sixth over and Liam Dawson (33) was caught behind in his seventh - before George Bailey went for a golden duck.

Rilee Rossouw (13) was lbw in Bess's next over.

Gareth Berg hit a 39-ball 49

(seven fours, two sixes) on a turning pitch before becoming Bess's sixth victim.

Hampshire were 206-7 but Kyle Abbott's 30-ball 33 and a last-wicket stand of 46, in which Mason Crane hit a career-best 29, gave the visitors a total to defend.

Somerset will start the penultimate day on 39-0.

Hants bowling (first innings): Topley 4-0-23-0, Abbott 14-2-49-4, Dawson 25-3-63-4, Crane 10-0-45-0, Ervine 2-2-0-0, Berg 2-3-0-8-2

Vince & Dawson away with Lions

Simon
Walter



JAMES Vince and Liam Dawson will miss Hampshire's Specsavers County Championship match against Warwickshire a week on Friday after being called up to the England Lions one-day squad. Vince will captain an experienced 13-man Lions squad including Dawson into a three-match series against South Africa A.

It means likely recalls for Jimmy Adams and Tom Alsop.

Ian Holland and Will Smith will also be in contention. Holland scored 192 and Smith his fourth century of the season as Hampshire beat Kent in the Second Eleven Championship this week. James Whitaker, the National Selector, said: "We wanted to select a strong and experienced Lions squad for this series, as it coincides with the early stages of the ICC Champions Trophy, and therefore provides us with the opportunity to keep our standby players in white-ball action.

"All the players in this squad will have the 2019 World Cup in their sights, and playing for the Lions offers them the platform to show what they can do.

"In addition to his considerable captaincy experience with Hampshire, James Vince has led the Lions before, to an excellent series victory against South Africa A in early 2015 and again when they played 50-over and T20 series against Pakistan A in Dubai in the winter of 2015-16 - and he also impressed in captaining the South to victory in the North-South Series earlier this year. He is a good tactical



Liam Dawson and James Vince

reader of the game.

"We were also mindful in selecting this squad that the series coincides with an important round of matches in the Specsavers County Championship.

"As ever we are grateful to the counties for their support." Surrey, who are the only county with three players in the squad, do not have a fixture in the round

of Championship matches starting on Friday June 2, and nor do Essex or Kent.

The Lions series starts at Trent Bridge the previous day with the remaining two games at Northampton on Saturday June 3 and Monday June 5, the latter a day-night fixture - with free entry to all three games.

England Lions squad: Dawid

Malan (Middlesex) Ben Duckett (Northants) Daniel Bell-Drummond (Kent) James Vince (Hampshire, captain) Liam Livingstone (Lancashire) Liam Dawson (Hampshire) Ben Foakes (Surrey, wk) Sam Curran (Surrey) Tom Curran (Surrey) Craig Overton (Somerset) Steven Finn (Middlesex) Dan Lawrence (Essex) George Garton (Sussex)

HANTS CRICKET



England's Ben Stokes hits one of his three sixes at the Ageas Bowl (PA)



Liam Plunkett dismisses Du Plessis



Jos Buttler goes to 50 not out (PA)



Ben Stokes celebrates his century (PA)

Stokes blasts Ageas Bowl ton

Simon
Walter



BEN Stokes cashed in on his remarkable early fortune with a match-winning century against South Africa that won England an Ageas Bowl thriller.

Stokes' 101 helped England to make 330-6 and the Proteas closed on 328-5 after a brilliant last over from Mark Wood, which began with only seven required.

Stokes, cleared to play after a knee injury scare in the series opener, was dropped first and second ball before equalling his career-best, hitting 11 fours and three sixes from 79 balls against an attack minus former Hampshire star Imran Tahir.

There were some typically brutal blows among them - all a far cry



Ben Stokes celebrates with Eoin Morgan after dismissing Hashim Amla

from two tentative edges on the forward-defence on nought and four, with ODI debutant spinner Keshav Maharaj the unlucky bowler.

South Africa dropped six catches

but after Stokes dismissed Hashim Amla (24), Quinton de Kock (98), AB de Villiers (52) and David Miller (71 not out from 51 balls) gave South Africa hope.



England's Joe Root evades a bouncer before being run out for 39 (PA)



Ben Stokes celebrates his second ODI century with Jos Buttler (PA)

LOCAL CRICKET



Teens Jack and George set to take on Tichborne

TICHBORNE Park find themselves up against Liphook & Ripley's two teenage tormentors in Sunday's Watsons National Village Championship county semi-final in rural Alresford, 1pm.

Left-arm Academy prospect Jack Campbell and the fiery George Neave are set to give Tichborne's batsmen an uncomfortable afternoon at the crease, writes Mike Vimpany.

Suman Ganguly is likely to skipper Liphook in the absence of Charles Janczur, who faces several weeks on the sidelines with a hamstring injury.

Liphook & Ripley: Rob Nicklin, Suman Ganguly, Giles Cover, Harry Munt, Gabe Broadhurst, Ric Williams, Jack Campbell, Dan Wrenn, Toby Flack, George Neave, Anthony White.

The winners of the Tichborne-Liphook tie will have home advantage in the county final against either Sparsholt or Paultoins, who lock horns at the Norman Edwards Ground. Big hitting Stuart Tognarelli returns from an assignment in Australia to play for the hosts.

Sparsholt: Frith, Haworth, Banks, Foster, Tognarelli, Mitchell, Worth, Doubell, Proctor, Phagami, Stone.

Redlynch & Hale carry the New Forest banner into the Dorset/Wiltshire semi-finals when they host former Lord's winners Goatacre at Woodfalls Cross.

The incentive to win is to host next month's county final against either Lacock or Burbage.

David Lloyd captains Rowledge in their Surrey group tie against Sinjungrammarians at Church Road.

Rowledge: Lloyd, Taylor, J Wish, Randall, R Yates, Metcalfe, Keeley, Martin, Baker, Board.

● The Windsor-based dairy company Watsons have been unveiled as the headline sponsor of the 2017 National Village Cup, which will be known as the Watsons Village Cup.



Chamika Karunaratne

Andover set to sign Sri Lankan

AILING Andover are poised to sign Chamika Karunaratne – as soon as the 20-year old Sri Lankan all-rounder can obtain a UK entry visa.

Last season's Division 1 champions have endured a desperate start to life in the ECB British Gas Premier Division, suffering three successive defeats, including

a crushing ten-wicket loss to the Hampshire Academy last week.

The Lions have been frustrated in their previous attempts to sign an overseas player, but are hopeful the Sri Lanka Under-23 international will join them for the start of the Time pennant all-day cricket at champions Havant

next Saturday.

Karunaratne represented Sri Lanka Under-19s on 19 occasions and has been a regular in their Under-23 side. He played Middlesex Premier League cricket for Stanmore two seasons ago, scoring 531 runs and taking 39 wickets with his pacy seam bowling.



Burridge: Standing (from left): Sully White, Jamie Richards, Lee Savident, Nick McMurray, Dan Standcliffe, Brighton Mugochi. Seated: Joe Collings-Wells, Will Steward, Rick Ankers, Derek Kenway, Marc Campopiano.

Third time lucky for division runners-up

LAST year's surprise Premier Division runners-up Burridge are up and running after an uncertain start to the campaign. There were suggestions they might struggle to get close to emulating last season's successes when they lost their opening two games to Bashley (Rydal) and New Milton, but they bounced back with a 23-run victory over St Cross Symondians.

"We hadn't become a bad side overnight or over the winter," re-

Mike Vimpany



marked skipper Rick Ankers after the initial two defeats. "We're one player different and are maturing nicely as a unit."

Former Hampshire batsman Derek Kenway and sixth-wicket pair Marc Campopiano and Dan Standcliffe all made fifties in a Burridge total of 252-6, which St

Cross (229-9) fell short of making after a decisive three-wicket spell with the new ball by Nick McMurray.

Kenway's knock at the top of the order was a delight to watch: he always seems to make batting look so easy and some of his cover driving brought back pleasant memories of his good days on the county circuit.

Ankers praised McMurray's disciplined spell.

"He was at the batsmen all the

time, squeezing them and generally making life difficult," Ankers added.

Burridge have lost South African all-rounder Geoff Dods since last season, but with Dan Standcliffe, McMurray and Sully White still possess a potent pace attack.

Their bowling now has more variety with Southampton Solent University left-hand all-rounder Brighton Mugochi linking up with Lee Savident in the spin department.

LOCAL CRICKET



Pair still unbeaten after three rounds

NEWLY promoted Longparish and title favourites Portsmouth & Southsea were the only clubs able to boast a three-match winning start to the Hampshire League season going into this weekend's fourth round of matches.

The unbeaten pair both bowled their round three opponents out for less than 100 – Hythe & Dibden being skittled for 89 by Longparish and New Milton II 97 at Portsmouth & Southsea.

The Watersiders have experience a tough start since last season's third place promotion finish in County 2, with demanding away matches at Hook & Newnham Basics and Lymington II on the card before Longparish's visit.

Losing the toss did Hythe no favours as they were rushed out for 89 in 30 overs at Jones Lane, where Jack Levy's good form continued with a 4-16 return.

The former Locks Heath all-rounder now has 12 wickets from Parish's three wins.

Fourth last term, Portsmouth & Southsea are already taking up their title prospects.

After whipping New Milton seconds by eight wickets, skipper Kieran Dunstan said: "There is a real buzz in the club at the moment and a feeling that we are going places."

"The quality of cricket being played is the best since I have been here

"The team are going out there at the moment thinking about nothing but winning the games."

P & S had few problems against New Milton, rushing the Green & Golds out for 97, with Jack Peach (3-33), Jonathan Willey (3-13) and Chris Turrell (2-14) doing the damage.

Jack Davies (69) led the Portsmouth & Southsea charge to victory securing his fifty off 68 balls in exactly one hour.

Ropley, third last year, are also unbeaten, but they were one of last weekend's three weather casualties alongside Bishops



Fareham and Croft's Tom Kent.

Waltham (v St Cross Symondians III) and Hook & Newnham Basics III, who were due to host United Services.

Lymington's two-match winning start ended at Harding Shute, where Ryde – beaten by arch island rivals Ventnor the previous week – inflicted a five-wicket defeat in a slightly rain affected affair.

Adie Hunt (53) and Dimitri

Adams (46) top scored for Lymington, who rallied from 96-6 to post 201 – but it wasn't enough to prevent Chichester University bookworm Josh Proctor from firing Ryde to victory.

Proctor put his studies to one side to flay an unbeaten 87 after Ben Wadmore (36) had given the islanders a sound start.

Ventnor II made it an island double when they chased down

OTs & Romsey's 218 to win by six wickets.

Despite a half-century by Stu Shapland (53), OTR were struggling at 114-6 against Hugh Calloway (2-35) and Sam Reed, who finished with 4-46.

Lewis Allen's timely 57, with handy support from Danny Mogg (31), lifted the total to 218, a total Ventnor chased down, despite going from 64-0 to 93-4.

"There is a real buzz in the club at the moment and a feeling that we are going places"

Tom Stafford (34) and young John Buckman (35) gave Ventnor a decent start, but it needed an unbroken 127-run stand between Calloway (70) and Alex Horton (56) to pick up the pieces after a mini-collapse.

Tom Kent pictured batted almost the entire length of the innings for 83 to ensure Fareham & Crofton got off the mark at the third attempt with a three-wicket win over visiting Burridge II, who tried hard to defend 205-5.

Simon Bevis batted all 50 overs for his 61 for Burridge, but Kent saw six partners come and go before Fareham got over the line.

He batted 124 balls and enjoyed a key 81-run stand with 17-year old Reece Abrams (38), from the WACA Grade club Bayswater Morley, who is spending the summer at Bath Lane.

Ben White made a handy 23 not out to secure victory for Fareham.

Shrewton's 280-8 against Rowledge II was comfortably the highest total of a rain affected round three programme.

Dan Bingley (87), Sam Gillot (69) and Will Sleeman (40) all made runs for Shrewton, who bowled Rowledge out for 169.

Twenty-nine teams set for under-19 T20 competition

TWENTY nine local clubs have entered the ECB Under-19 Club T20 competition, with the teams in seven groups of four – and Basingstoke & North Hants playing in Berkshire!

Cup holders Bournemouth face the prospect of two trips to the Isle of Wight as they are paired with Cowes-based North-

wood, Shanklin and Ventnor.

Only four ECB Southern Premier Division clubs – Andover, Bashley (Rydal), New Milton, and St Cross Symondians – are entering teams.

Calmore Sports get the competition underway when they host Langley Manor and Totton & Eling in a triangular tourna-

ment at Loperwood Park on Monday, 10am.

Groups –
A: Bashley (Rydal), Fawley, New Milton, Sway.

B: Calmore Sports, Langley Manor, OTs & Romsey, Totton & Eling.

C: Aldershot, Grayshott, Hartley Wintney, Ropley.

D: Portsmouth, Portsmouth & Southsea, Sarisbury Athletic, Waterlooville.

E: Fair Oak, Hampshire Hogs, Petersfield, Steep.

F: Andover, Compton & Chandler's Ford, St Cross Symondians, Trojans.

G: Bournemouth, Northwood, Shanklin, Ventnor

SOUTHERN
Daily Echo

FIND THE BALL



THIS WEEK'S JACKPOT

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or £1,000 nearest miss prize...

PLUS 70 consolation prizes of £15 each week

**20 for Southern Daily Echo
20 for Daily Echo Bournemouth
10 for Dorset Echo
10 for Sunday Independent
10 for Brighton Argus**

FIND THE BALL is a test of skill and football knowledge and is open to readers of the Southampton, Bournemouth, Dorset Echos and Brighton Argus.

You have to use your skill and judgement to determine the exact centre of the ball.

Mark an X with a ballpoint pen on the picture where you consider that position to be clear rubber stamps and self adhesive labels will also be accepted.

Every coupon will be carefully examined and the jackpot prize will be paid to the entrant whose cross marks the exact centre of the ball when the photograph was taken.

If the Jackpot is not won, £1,000 will be added to next week's jackpot.

The nearest-miss prize of £1,000 will be paid out each week to the

competitor whose cross is nearest to the centre of the ball when there is no jackpot winner.

When a jackpot has been won the next week's prize reverts back to £5,000 and the nearest-miss prize stays at £1,000.

If the Jackpot is not won after 46 weeks, when standing at £50,000, the nearest miss prize of £1,000 will be paid out and the jackpot will remain at £50,000 each week until there is a jackpot winner, then the jackpot starts again at £5,000, with the nearest miss prize remaining at £1,000 each week.

If there is more than one winner the jackpot will be shared and, similarly, if there is more than one runner-up the nearest miss prize will also be shared.

RESULTS



CLOSING DATE FOR POSTAL ENTRIES
Thursday
9am,
1st June
2017
Names of winners will be published on Saturday, 3rd June 2017

An incident in an Hamble v Bush Hill Match

Winners

Competition number S21

JACKPOT WINNER NO WINNER

CONGRATULATIONS

S Johnson, Christchurch, Dorset

Who wins the Nearest Miss Prize of £1,000

The following competitors each receive a consolation prize of £15

C Aitchison	Southampton, Hants	J Matthews	Wokingham, Berks
M Baker	Southampton, Hants	T Matthews	Southampton, Hants
M Ballard	Southampton, Hants	W McDonald	Fair Oak, Hants
M Barker	Gosport, Hants	M Phillips	Southampton, Hants
C Collins	Southampton, Hants	L Ricketts	Winchester, Hants
D Feher	Southampton, Hants	M Ricketts	Southampton, Hants
K Feher	Southampton, Hants	G Taylor	Southampton, Hants
K Harnett	Southampton, Hants	J Veitch	Waltham Chase, Hants
J Jenkins	Fareham, Hants	S Walker	Fareham, Hants
G Jessup	Southampton, Hants	C Yaldren	Southampton, Hants

Rules

1. You are allowed a minimum of 60 crosses and a maximum of 450 per coupon. Coupons with 451 or more will be disqualified. Entries altered defaced or mutilated will be invalid. Crosses must be distinct and separate. 2. Competitors may submit as many coupons as they wish. Members of a family can send their entries in one envelope with a covering postal order or cheque. 3. No responsibility can be accepted for entries delayed, lost or mislaid. Proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. 4. Payment may be made by postal order or cheque for the correct amount payable to Newsquest, and crossed 'X' Co. Stamps will not be accepted in payment. 5. A competitor cannot win more than one share of the prize money across all titles each week. 6. The Editor's decision on winning entry or entries and matters relating to this competition is binding in honour only. NO CORRESPONDENCE CAN BE ENTERED INTO. 7. Employees of NEWSQUEST Media Group and subsidiary companies and members of their families are not eligible to enter the competition. 8. Address entries to FTB, Newspaper House, Test Lane, Southampton, SO16 9JX in a sealed envelope. Understamped entries are not accepted. 9. Prize monies are held for and on behalf of winners. 10. Do not send cash in the post. 11. Winners will be required to participate in publicity. 12. Photocopies not accepted. 13. For rules go to www.dailyecho.co.uk/promotions/rules. 14. If you pay by cheque your prize money will be paid to you once cheque has cleared.

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27th May, 2017

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Daily Echo

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Southern Daily Echo 12 noon Tuesday
Dorset Echo Closing time Monday

Deadlines for selected newsagents collection boxes as listed in:
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Southern Daily Echo 10.00 am Tuesday
Dorset Echo Closing time Monday

A list of participating newsagents will be published in the Echoes on the first Saturday of each month

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Cheques payable to newsquest

SAINTS FIXTURES 2016/17



		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
August															
Sat 13 Watford (h)	D 1-1	Forster	Cedric+	Targett	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Romeu	Davis	=W-Prowse	*Long	Tadic	Redmond 1	+Pied	=Højbjerg	*Austin
Fri 19 Man Utd (a)	L 1-2	Forster	Cedric	Targett	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu*	Højbjerg	Davis=	Austin	Long+	Redmond	+Rodriguez	=Austin	*Clasie
Sat 27 Sunderland (h)	D1-1	Forster	Cedric	Targett	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Højbjerg*	Davis	Austin=	Tadic+	Redmond	+Long	=Rodriguez	*W-Prowse
September															
Sat 10 Arsenal (a)	L 1-2	Forster	Cedric	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Clasie*	Tadic1=	Rodriguez+	Redmond	+Long	=W-Prowse	*Højbjerg
Thurs 15 Sp Prague (Eur Lge) (h)	W 3-0	Forster	Martina	Targett	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Romeu=	W-Prowse	Højbjerg	Tadic*	Austin 2+	Long	+Rodriguez1	=Davis	*Redmond
Sun 18 Swansea (h)	W 1-0	Forster	Cedric	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Clasie*	Tadic=	Long+	Redmond	+Højbjerg	=Martina	*Austin1
Wed 21 C Palace (Lge Cup, H)	W 2-0	McCarthy	Martina	Targett	Yoshida	Fonte	W-Prowse	Reed	Clasie	Hesketh1*	Austin1+	Long=	+Redmond	=Tadic	*Højbjerg
Sun 25 West Ham (a)	W 3-0	Forster	Soares+	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Højbjerg	Tadic1*	Austin1=	Redmond	+Martina	=Long	*W-Prowse1
Thurs 29 Hapoel (Europa Lge) (a)	D 0-0	Forster	Martina	Targett	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Romeu	W-Prowse	Clasie	Hesketh+	Long	Redmond=	+Tadic	=Højbjerg	
October															
Sun 2 Leicester (a)	D 0-0	Forster	Soares+	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Højbjerg	Tadic*	Austin=	Redmond	+Martina	=W-Prowse	*Long
Sun 16 Burnley (h)	W 3-1	Forster	Martina	Targett+	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Clasie	Tadic	Austin2=	Redmond1*	+McQueen	=Rodriguez	*W-Pr
Thurs 20 Inter (Europa Lge, a)	L 0-1	Forster	Martina	McQueen	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Romeu	W-Pr	Højbjerg	Tadic*	Long+	Rodriguez=	+Austin	=Davis	*Boufal
Sun 23 Man City (a)	D 1-1	Forster	Martina	McQueen	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Clasie+	Tadic*	Austin=	Redmond1	+Højbjerg	=W-Prowse	*Boufal
Wed 26 Sunderland (Lge Cup, h)	W 1-0	McCarthy	Stephens	McQueen	Yoshida	Fonte	Reed +	W-Prowse	Boufal1	Isgrove=	Højbjerg	Rodriguez*	+Clasie	=Redmond	
Sun 30 Chelsea (h)	L 0-2	Forster	Martina	Bertrand+	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Clasie*	Tadic=	Austin	Redmond	+McQueen	=Højbjerg	*Boufal
November															
Thurs 3 Inter (Europa Lge) (h)	W 2-1	Forster	Martina	McQueen	Van Dijk1	Yoshida	Romeu	W-Prowse	Højbjerg	Tadic+	Rodriguez=	Redmond	+Davis	=Austin	
Sat 6 Hull (a)	L 1-2	Forster	Yoshida	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Clasie=	Tadic+	Austin1	Redmond*	+Boufal	=Rodriguez	*JWP
Sat 19 Liverpool (h)	D 0-0	Forster	Cedric	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	Davis	Højbjerg+	Boufal=	Austin*	Redmond	+Reed	=Long	*Rodriguez
Thurs 24 Sp Prague (Eur Lge, a)	L 0-1	Forster	Martina	McQueen	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Clasie+	W-Prowse	Højbjerg=	Long	Rodriguez*	Redmond	+Austin	=Boufal	*Romeu
Sun 27 Everton (h)	W 1-0	Forster	Cedric	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	W-Prowse	Højbjerg	Sims+	Austin1=	Redmond*	+McQueen	=Long	*Clasie
Wed 30 Arsenal (League Cup, a)	W 2-0	Forster	Martina	Bertrand1	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Clasie1	Davis	Reed+	Boufal=	Long	McQueen	+Højbjerg	=Sims	
December															
Sat 3 Crystal Palace (a)	L 0-3	Forster	Cedric	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	W-Prowse	Højbjerg+	Boufal =	Austin*	Redmond	+Sims	=Long	*McQueen
Thurs 8 Hapoel (Europa Lge, h)	D1-1	Forster	Cedric	Bernard	Van Dijk1	Yoshida	Romeu	Davis	Højbjerg+	Sims*	Austin=	Redmond	+W-Prowse	=Long	*Tadic
Sun 11 Middlesbrough (h)	W 1-0	Forster	Martina	McQueen	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	W-Prowse	Clasie+	Boufal1=	Rodriguez	Tadic*	+Long	=Davis	*Redmond
Wed 14 Stoke (a)	D 0-0	Forster	Martina*	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Fonte	Romeu	W-Prowse	Davis	Boufal	Long+	Redmond=	+Rodriguez	=Tadic	*McQueen
Sun 18 Bournemouth (a)	W 3-1	Forster	Soares	Bertrand1	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Reed+	Højbjerg	Clasie	Boufal*	Rodriguez2=	Redmond	+Davis	=Long	*Tadic
Wed 28 Tottenham (h)	L 1-4	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Van Dijk1	Fonte	Romeu	W-Prowse	Davis+	Boufal=	Rodriguez*	Redmond	+Long	=Højbjerg	*Tadic
Sat 31 West Brom (h)	L 1-2	Forster	Martina+	McQueen	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Romeu	Højbjerg=	Davis	Boufal	Long1	Tadic*	+W-Prowse	=Rodriguez	*Sims
January															
Mon 2 Everton (a)	L 0-3	Forster	Soares+	McQueen	Yoshida	Fonte	Romeu	J W-Prowse	Clasie=	Tadic*	Rodriguez	Redmond	+Stephens	=Long	*Boufal
Sat 7 Norwich (FAC, a)	D 2-2	Lewis	Stephens	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Reed+	J W-Prowse	Højbjerg	Tadic	Long=	Sims*	+Romeu	=Rodriguez	*Redmond
Wed 11 Liverpool (LC, h)	W 1-0	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Romeu	Clasie=	Davis+	Tadic	Rodriguez*	Redmond1	+W-Prowse	=Højbjerg	*Long
Sat 14 Burnley (a)	L 0-1	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Yoshida	Romeu	J W-Prowse	Højbjerg	Tadic+	Long	Redmond=	+Rodriguez	=Sims	
Wed 18 Norwich (FAC, h)	W 1-0	Lewis	Martina	McQueen	Stephens	Yoshida	Reed+	J W-Prowse	Clasie	Sims	Long1	Rodriguez=	+Romeu	=Redmond	
Sat 21 Leicester (h)	W 3-0	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Van Dijk	Yoshida+	Romeu	J W-Prowse1	Højbjerg=	Tadic1	Rodriguez1*	Redmond	+Stephens	=Clasie	*Long
Wed 25 Liverpool (LC, a)	W 1-0	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	J W-Prowse=	Davis	Tadic	Rodriguez+	Redmond*	+Long	=Højbjerg	*Sims
Sat 28 Arsenal (FAC) (h)	L 0-5	Lewis	Martina	McQueen	Stephens	Gardos	Reed	Clasie	Højbjerg	Sims	Long =	Isgrove+	+Tadic	=Redmond	
Tues 31 Swansea (a)	L 1-2	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	Clasie	Davis	Tadic+	Long1	Redmond=	+Boufal	=McQueen	
February															
Sat 4 West Ham (h)	L 1-3	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	J W-Prowse	Davis	Gabbiadini1	Boufal+	Rodriguez=	+Long	=Redmond	
Sat 11 Sunderland (a)	W 4-0	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	J W-Prowse	Davis	Gabbiadini2=	Tadic+	Redmond	+Højbjerg	=Long1	
Sun 26 Man Utd (LC final)	L 2-3	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	J W-Prowse	Davis+	Gabbiadini2=	Tadic*	Redmond	+Rodriguez	=Long	*Boufal
March															
Sat 4 Watford (a)	W 4-3	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	J W-Prowse*	Davis	Gabbiadini1+	Tadic=	Redmond	+Long	=Clasie	*Boufal
Sun 19 Tottenham (a)	L 1-2	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	J W-Prowse1	Davis	Gabbiadini+	Tadic=	Redmond*	+Long	=Boufal	*Rodriguez
April															
Sat 1 Bournemouth (h)	D 0-0	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	J W-Prowse+	Davis	Rodriguez=	Tadic*	Redmond	+Boufal	=Long	*McQueen
Wed 5 Crystal Palace (h)	W 3-1	Forster	Soares	McQueen	Stephens	Yoshida1	Romeu	J W-Prowse1	Davis+	Long	Tadic	Redmond1*	+Højbjerg	=Rodriguez	
Sat 8 West Brom (a)	W 1-0	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Clasie1+	J W-Prowse=	Højbjerg	Long	Tadic	Redmond*	+Reed	=Sims	*McQueen
Sat 15 Man City (h)	L 0-3	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Højbjerg	J W-Prowse+	Davis	Gabbiadini=	Tadic	Redmond*	+Boufal	=Long	*Rodriguez
Tues 25 Chelsea (a)	L 2-4	Forster	Soares	Bertrand1	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu1	J W-Prowse+	Davis	Gabbiadini=	Tadic	Boufal*	+Long	=Rodriguez	*Redmond
Sat 29 Hull (h)	D 0-0	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	Boufal+	Davis	Gabbiadini=	Tadic	Redmond*	+Sims	=Long	*Rodriguez
May															
Sun 7 Liverpool (a)	D 0-0	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	Boufal+	Davis	Gabbiadini=	Tadic	W-Prowse	+Redmond	=Long	
Wed 10 Arsenal (h)	L 0-2	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	W-Prowse*	Davis	Gabbiadini	Tadic+	Redmond=	+Rodriguez	=Long	*Boufal
Sat 13 Middlesbrough (a)	W 2-1	Forster	Pied	Bertrand	Caceres	Yoshida	Romeu	Højbjerg+	Clasie	Rodriguez1	Boufal=	Long*	+Davis	=Redmond1	*Austin
Wed 17 Man Utd (h)	D 0-0	Forster	Soares+	Targett	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	W-Prowse=	Davis	Gabbiadini*	Tadic	Redmond	+Pied	=Boufal	*Rodriguez
Sun 21 Stoke (h)	L 0-1	Forster	Soares	Bertrand	Stephens	Yoshida	Romeu	W-Prowse+	Davis	Austin=	Tadic*	Redmond	+Pied	=Boufal	*Gabbiadini

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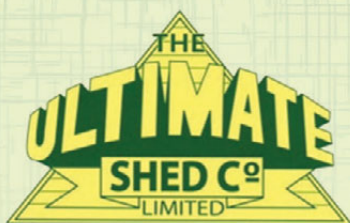
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Five to watch out for ...

All eyes will be on the likes of Ben Stokes, AB de Villiers and Virat Kohli when the Champions Trophy gets under way next week.

While those leading lights will be expected to shine on English soil, the Sports Pink looks at those who may not be the star attraction in their team, but may prove to be just as important.

JASON ROY (England)

Stokes and Jos Buttler may provide the fireworks towards the back end of the innings, but whether they can play with uninhibited freedom could depend on how Roy lays the platform at the top of the order.

One of England's best batsmen at last year's World Twenty20 in India, the Surrey opener has made three centuries and nine fifties in 40 one-day internationals and will be expected to supply the early impetus alongside Alex Hales.

Capable of explosive innings himself but is susceptible to the turning ball.



Jason Roy

PAT CUMMINS (Australia)

Australia will have an embarrassment of fast bowling resources and the ace in their pack might be the lightning quick Cummins, arguably the fastest pacemen in the world right now capable of spells exceeding 90mph.

Having overcome a succession of injury problems that have plagued his international career for much of the last few years, the 24-year-old, who has taken 51 wickets in 28 ODIs, could be ready to deliver on the global stage.

MUSTAFIZUR RAHMAN (Bangladesh)

A crafty left-arm seamer with a slower ball that has bamboozled several top-class international batsmen.

PINK

One-day format

David Clough

THE 2017 Champions Trophy may help to decide whether one-day international cricket is preparing for a last hurrah or a global resurgence.

Home fortunes, and as ever India's, will dictate the profile and consequence of an event which – another constant on English shores – will be a hostage too to the vagaries of mid-summer weather.

It is remarkable already that the Champions Trophy has survived into a 10th incarnation, defying the odds and clamour against it many times over as critics – and at times administrators themselves – have advised commuting the tournament into either an extra World Twenty20 or a Test championship.

It has come close to the brink on more than one occasion and remains more vulnerable perhaps than any other set-piece event to the uncertain future of world cricket.

This summer's tournament offers more than a fair share of glorious uncertainty off its own bat – as befits a global event still, just about by consensus, worth its salt.

The individual stakes are high perhaps for the hosts.

England have still yet to win a multi-nation 50-over competition but, at their 19th attempt since the first of 11 World Cups back in 1975, they are more credible contenders to come of age at last than perhaps any time since the early 1990s.

Since then, they have been especially hapless challengers at their own World Cup in 1999 – famously out of contention even before the tournament song had been released – and the last one in Australia and New Zealand two years ago.

In between, on the Champions Trophy's two visits to this country, England have reached the final – and for good measure were twice bang in contention to win the trophy until agonisingly late in the day.

In deep September 2004 at The Oval, Michael Vaughan's team reduced West Indies to 147 for eight in pursuit of 218 – only to fall foul of an unbroken stand of 71 between numbers nine and 10.

Then in the most recent edition, in June 2013, Alastair Cook's world number ones flaked out with the bat chasing 129 from 20 overs against India on a rainy day at Edgbaston – despite recovering at one stage to 110 for four with 2.3 overs left to make another 20.

Back to the future, though – and

Champions Trophy talking points ...

ENGLAND go into the ICC Champions Trophy on home soil as favourites despite having never won a global 50-over tournament.

This is the third time England has staged the event, and the hosts have been beaten finalists on the last two occasions in 2004 and 2013.

Here, the Sports Pink looks at the big talking points ahead of the eight-team competition.

ENGLAND'S TURN AT LAST?

Possibly, England are yet to win a 50-over global trophy in more than 40 years since the inaugural World Cup. It is a damning statistic for a nation that invented the sport and exported it to opponents who so often seem to play it better. It is one that keeps returning too, updated for extra resonance every time another opportunity is missed and the next arrives. There is only one way to stop the cycle – and in the adventurous team assembled under and energised by Eoin Morgan, England's prospects are better perhaps than at any time since the early 1990s. Their powerhouse batting extends all the way down the order, and they have some outstanding fielders too. If there is a comparative weakness it has to be the bowling attack, which is evolving – and may just be ready in time for the next World Cup in England in two years' time. Before then, though, it would be rather handy to have the dress-rehearsal title already in the bag.

MORE RUNS RECORDS IN THE OFFING

It is the hosts who have put themselves on top of the world when it comes to racking up the all-time highest one-day international total. England's 444 for three against Pakistan at Trent Bridge last summer exceeded by one run a record which had stood to Sri Lanka – against Holland – for a decade. The 2015 World Cup changed ODI cricket, as 300-plus scores became not just utterly routine but also routinely chaseable. Overhead conditions, a mercurial factor in England, will help to dictate whether the upward trend continues next month. But traditional limitations have disappeared – and especially early in the tournament when surfaces may be friendliest for batsmen, with or without cloud cover, teams will be reaching for the sky.

50 OVERS ... AND OUT

The future of international cricket's median format is far from assured. Ever since Twenty20 began to engage crowds, the sport's chattering classes have mused on whether 50 overs a side



England batsman Jos Buttler



Ben Stokes

what of their prospects this time?

Favourites with some bookmakers, Eoin Morgan's men have many of the attributes needed to succeed where their predecessors have not.

Morgan, and coaches Trevor Bayliss and Paul Farbrace, have revolutionised the team since the shambles of early 2015.

Much of the playing person-

nel was already in place but had simply not reached its potential. Since the statement of intent against New Zealand at Edgbaston, at their first attempt after the last World Cup, England have demonstrated many times that they have the intent and ability to top 300 – even 400 – against strong opposition.

They have proved too, though,

PINK

at crossroads



has had its day. Much of it is hot air, most prevalent in commentary boxes on rainy afternoons or when an ODI has become one-sided – and in England at least, despite the arrival of Twenty20 in club cricket too, 100 overs in a day remains the recipe with which amateurs and their own supporters can relate.

The format is still very vulnerable, though. England's continued investment in it, for example, is assured only as far as the next World Cup. To keep its critics at bay, ODI cricket cannot afford even one duff tournament.

PITCH PERFECT?

It is perhaps not entirely partisan to say the culmination of the last Champions Trophy was a little unsatisfactory. Of course, if England had sustained their chase of 129 from 20 overs in a rain-shortened match at Edgbaston in 2013 it would have been easier for a home audience to overlook a surface which played significantly to India's strengths.

England collapsed from 110 for four to finish on 124 for eight after future nemesis Ravi Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja had done the early damage and then seamer Ishant Sharma interrupted the recovery. The ball spun sharply and, worse, died in the tired pitch.

Just the same three venues will again be in use for 15 matches in 18 days, with The Oval this time hosting the final, but organisers' promise of fresh pitches is more encouraging.

... AND THE WINNERS ARE?

Too many 'unknowns' to start predicting this with anything even approaching confidence. The unforgiving nature of the Champions Trophy – just three matches to qualify for a semi-final, and one bad hour enough to finish a campaign – means forecast is fraught. That is exactly as it should be for any sporting spectacle, though – no one wants a foregone conclusion. Arguably, hosts England and their Royal London Series opponents South Africa may have a minor advantage with early acclimatisation and the chance to find some form. Marginally, with a more convincing bowling attack, South Africa could have what it takes this time. But don't rule anyone out.

that their bowling attack can be exposed and punished.

England are therefore not a banker bet, for all the star quality of Indian Premier League revelation Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler – and several others.

One of the beauties of a tournament the International Cricket Council has deliberately kept to a tight format – unlike the often

unwieldy World Cup – is that no team is head and shoulders ahead.

Limited-overs cricket is an unpredictable beast, whoever the contenders, and this year's showpiece really is anybody's guess.

How will the elite IPL brigade react, for example, for each of their teams to the switch in content and format?

Will habitual big-hitting and

pinpoint death bowling move seamlessly to the new challenge, or will it be a case of who adapts quickest and best?

Will England feel too much the pressure of this dress-rehearsal campaign for the World Cup itself back in this country in 2019, or will they sustain the crowd-pleasing metamorphosis which has taken hold of late?

Then there is Australia, World Cup holders but weighed down or defiant by a vexed stand-off with their own board over a pay dispute which could yet put next winter's Ashes in doubt.

Along the way to the Oval final are some mouth-watering clashes, not least two Edgbaston sell-outs for India against Pakistan on the first weekend and then England and Australia on the second.

Among the other hopefuls, cricket's favourite modern cliché – albeit one repeatedly born out in fact – is that 2015 World Cup finalists New Zealand always punch above their weight.

In the post-McCullum era, they are perhaps between big tournaments but never to be under-estimated.

Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are plausible challengers – but Virat Kohli's India remain the likeliest lads from the sub-continent.

If there are anything close to winners-in-waiting, South Africa have the all-round ability and strength in depth – unaccustomed as they are, like the hosts, to rising to the biggest occasions.

There is a more substantial bottom line this summer than the mere outcome, though.

Whoever brings their A game to England in June must not just win the silverware but help light up the tournament too.

The 2015 World Cup was a winner, but if 50-over cricket is to keep the wolves from the door it still cannot afford to slip up anywhere any time soon.

2017 Champions Trophy takes place in England and Wales next month.

Champions Trophy fixtures

- June 1: England v Bangladesh at The Oval, Group A (1030)
- June 2: Australia v New Zealand at Edgbaston, Group A (1030)
- June 3: Sri Lanka v South Africa at The Oval, Group B (1030)
- June 4: India v Pakistan at Edgbaston, Group B (1030)
- June 5: Australia v Bangladesh at The Oval, Group A (1330)
- June 6: England v New Zealand at Cardiff, Group A (1030)
- June 7: Pakistan v South Africa at Edgbaston, Group B (1330)
- June 8: India v Sri Lanka at The Oval, Group B (1030)
- June 9: New Zealand v Bangladesh at Cardiff, Group A (1030)
- June 10: England v Australia at Edgbaston, Group A (1030)
- June 11: India v South Africa at The Oval, Group B (1030)
- June 12: Sri Lanka v Pakistan at Cardiff, Group B (1030)
- June 14: Semi-final at Cardiff (1030)
- June 15: Semi-final at Edgbaston (1030)
- June 18: Final at The Oval (1030)
- June 19: Reserve day

Five to watch out for ...

from facing page

Mustafizur has already taken three five-wicket hauls among his 42 scalps in 17 ODIs.

Injuries halted his spell at Sussex last summer as well as the chance to face England during their Bangladesh tour a few months ago but the 21-year-old appears to be warming up nicely for this tournament, having taken four for 23 against Ireland in Malahide last week.

QUINTON DE KOCK (South Africa)

Do not be fooled by the babyface: the South African wicketkeeper-batsman has already earned comparisons with Australian legend Adam Gilchrist and for good reason.

Aged just 24, De Kock already has 12 ODI centuries, sometimes taking the spotlight away from the destructive De Villiers, while he is particularly efficient at dealing with short-pitched



Quinton de Kock

bowling and is strong on the leg side.

His first taste of international cricket on these shores came on Wednesday and he may be targeted by the swinging ball at the start of South Africa's innings.

ROHIT SHARMA (India)

A more orthodox talent than fellow ODI openers Roy or De Kock, Rohit is still capable of matching the very best of master blasters as he proved when he scorched 264 against Sri Lanka in November 2014 – the highest individual ODI score. As he remains the only batsman to register two double hundreds in the format, his presence cannot be underestimated. Proved his pedigree outside India with an unbeaten 171 in Perth 18 months ago but has limited international experience in this country.

PINK

Trophy numbers

Ahead of the Champions Trophy starting on June 1, the Sports Pink takes a numerical look at the tournament.

8

this will be the eighth edition of the tournament, and the sixth known by the name Champions Trophy after two under the previous ICC KnockOut Trophy format.

6

there have been six different winners of the seven previous tournaments, with Australia the only team to lift the trophy twice after winning in 2006 and 2009. South Africa, New Zealand, Sri Lanka, the West Indies and India are the other past winners.

2

England have twice been runners-up, on their previous times as host nation in 2004 and 2013.

791

West Indies batsman Chris Gayle's record all-time run total in



Chris Gayle

the Champions Trophy. Among players present at this year's event, South Africa captain AB de Villiers leads the way on 378.

28

New Zealand's Kyle Mills leads the way in terms of wickets but is now retired. Sri Lanka's limited-overs specialist Lasith Malinga is his nearest active challenger on 22.

145no

Nathan Astle's record innings in the Champions Trophy, for New Zealand against the United States in 2004. Finishing not out took him ahead of Andy Flower's 145 for Zimbabwe against India two years earlier for the record.

6-14

Sri Lanka's Farveez Maharoof returned the tournament's best ever bowling figures, against the West Indies in 2006. It is the only time a bowler has taken six wickets in a Champions Trophy match.

11

years since Bangladesh last featured in the Champions Trophy. The Tigers qualified at the West Indies' expense this year.

Introducing Mourinho's United fledglings



Josh Harrop

Manchester United boss Jose Mourinho handed a number of inexperienced youngsters a run-out in the Premier League clash with Crystal Palace. Here, the Sports Pink looks at his fledglings.

JOEL PEREIRA (goalkeeper, age 20)
Background: Returned from a loan spell in Portugal with Belenenses to make his senior United debut in January, coming on as a late sub in the FA Cup win against Wigan.
Performance: Did not have too much to deal with but coped well when things did come his way.

DEMETRI MITCHELL (winger/full-back, age 20)

Background: An attack-minded player who has been deployed as a left-back or wing-back for the reserves this term and was an unused sub in recent ILeague games at Tottenham and Saints.
Performance: Produced eye-catching moments both in attack and defence.

SCOTT MCTOMINAY (midfielder/forward, age 20)

Background: McTominay, 6ft 4in tall and capable of playing in midfield or up front, made his league debut as a substitute at Arsenal earlier this month.
Performance: Looked composed in the middle of the park virtually throughout.

JOSH HARROP (midfielder, age 21)

Background: The skilful midfielder went into this game having scored a hat-trick for the reserves against Tottenham.
Performance: The star of the show, with his wonderful early strike the highlight of an impressive display, full of confidence.

ANGEL GOMES (midfielder, age 16)
Background: Gomes, who has skipped England at under-16 and under-17 level, went into the game having just become the youngest-ever recipient of United's youth team player of the year award.

Performance: Got on for the last couple of minutes, replacing Wayne Rooney, having little opportunity to make a mark but making history as the first player born in the 2000s to play in the Premier League.

Ones to watch at Roland Garros

Rafael Nadal goes into the French Open next week as the favourite to win an unprecedented 10th title.

Defending champion Novak Djokovic appears to have found some form at just the right time and will have new coach Andre Agassi in tow while world number one Andy Murray will hope to put his struggles behind him.

With Serena Williams on maternity leave, Angelique Kerber heads a wide open women's field while Garbine Muguruza defends her title.

Here, the Sports Pink picks out some other players to watch at Roland Garros.

DOMINIC THIEM

Still only 23, Thiem's power game is perfectly suited to clay. He made his grand slam breakthrough with a run to the semi-finals in Paris 12 months ago and has been second only to Nadal this clay season. After losing to the Spaniard in finals in Barcelona and Madrid, Thiem handed Nadal his first loss in four tournaments in the quarter-finals in Rome last week.

ALEXANDER ZVEREV

German Zverev might just have leapfrogged Nick Kyrgios as the leader of the next generation with his title in Rome, beating Djokovic in the final. That elevated the 20-year-old into the top 10 - a hugely impressive feat in an era when virtually half of the top 30 are in their 30s. Mentally strong with few weaknesses in his game, Zverev pushed Nadal to five sets at the Australian Open.

DAVID GOFFIN



Dominic Thiem.

Roland Garros was the place where the baby-faced Belgian announced his promise to the world with a run to the fourth round in 2012. Last year he went one better and was also a quarter-finalist at the Australian Open in January. A player with plenty of style, Goffin has added substance and is reaping the rewards.

FABIO FOGNINI

If titles were won on talent, then flamboyant Italian Fognini would have collected several grand slams by now. At his best, he is virtually unplayable, and he brushed aside Murray in the second round in Rome after pushing Nadal all the way in Madrid.

ELINA SVITOLINA

It may take your average tennis

fan a few guesses to name 2017's leading female player. Ukrainian Svitolina climbed to the top of the standings courtesy of her victory over Halep in the Rome final, giving her a third title of the season. The 22-year-old has been a steady improver and reached the quarter-finals of the French Open two years ago.

SVETLANA KUZNETSOVA

Kuznetsova won her first grand slam title at the US Open way back in 2004. She added a French Open crown five years later and, at 31, is back in the top 10 and pushing for the big trophies once more. Roland Garros has been the canny Russian's most profitable slam, with four quarter-finals, one semi-final, one final and one title.

KRISTINA MLADENOVIC

The feisty Frenchwoman has been one of the revelations of 2017. Mladenovic won her first WTA Tour title in St Petersburg and three more final appearances have propelled her into the top 15. The 24-year-old has reached the third round at Roland Garros for the last three years and won the doubles last summer with Caroline Garcia.

ANETT KONTAVEIT

Those looking for a real dark horse could do a lot worse than the 21-year-old Estonian. Ranked outside the top 100 only two months ago, Kontaveit is now at 52 after reaching the final of the WTA event in Biel and the quarter-finals in both Stuttgart and Rome. Her scalps have included Muguruza and Kerber, who she overpowered 6-4 6-0 last week.

PINK

Harrop rewrites the United history books

JOSH Harrop became Manchester United's 100th Premier League goalscorer when he put them 1-0 up against Crystal Palace.

The 21-year-old finished impressively after being picked out by Paul Pogba in the 15th minute of his senior debut.

He joined Zlatan Ibrahimovic, Pogba, Henrikh Mkhitaryan and Marcos Rojo as the new names this season in United's list of Premier League goalscorers, taking it to three figures.

Here, the Sports Pink takes a statistical look at United's century of scorers:

First goalscorer

Mark Hughes v Sheffield United, August 15, 1992

50th goalscorer

Rio Ferdinand v Wigan, December 14, 2005

100th goalscorer

Josh Harrop v Crystal Palace, May 21, 2017

Most goals

183 – Wayne Rooney, 2004-present

Most goals in a season

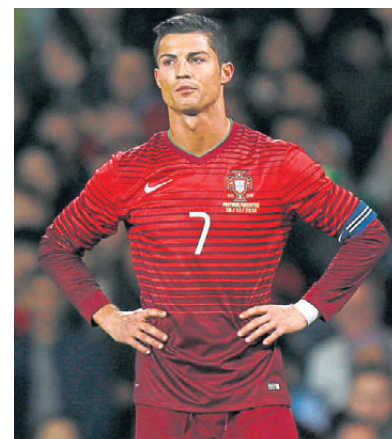
31 – Cristiano Ronaldo (pictured) 2007-08

Youngest goalscorer

Federico Macheda, 17 years, 226 days, v Aston Villa April 5, 2009

Oldest goalscorer

Ryan Giggs, 39 years, 86 days, v QPR February 23, 2013



Button bids for a fairytale

Mark Staniforth

LEWIS Hamilton arrived in Monaco this week just six points behind championship rival Sebastian Vettel following his victory at the Spanish Grand Prix.

Here, the Sports Pink looks at the key talking points as the southern French port plays host to the most famous race on the Formula One calendar this Sunday.

BUTTON IS BACK

Jenson Button, the 2009 world champion, will take centre stage in Monte Carlo this weekend as he prepares for his Formula One comeback. The 37-year-old, who called time on his career in Abu Dhabi last November, will make a one-off appearance for McLaren with Fernando Alonso in America competing at the Indianapolis 500. Button, yet to test this year's car, will be given his first taste of action in practice on Thursday. The low-powered nature of the Monte Carlo street circuit means there will not be as much emphasis on McLaren's lacklustre Honda engine and, as such, could play into Button's hands. So, could the veteran Englishman spring a fairytale result on Sunday?

HAMILTON TO MATCH SENNA

Hamilton is just six points adrift of Vettel following his win in Spain to leave the championship rivals on two victories apiece this season. And the Briton is now just one pole position shy of equalling



Lewis Hamilton

the number achieved by his boyhood hero Ayrton Senna, too. Senna is widely considered as arguably the greatest one-lap specialist of all-time, and where better than Monaco for Hamilton to match his pole tally? Senna won more races in Monte Carlo (six) than any other driver – including five consecutive victories between 1989 and 1993 – while a statue will be unveiled at the Fairmont Hotel to celebrate 30 years since his first win here back in 1987.

MERCEDES READY TO "BRING DOWN THE GARAGE ROOF"

Mercedes boss Toto Wolff revealed that his team's battle with Ferrari has helped him rediscover his love for the sport. Wolff's Mercedes team are this season bidding for a fourth consecutive drivers' and constructors' championship following an un-

precedented run of success. But this marks the first campaign in which another team has been on a level playing field. "I love the intense competition," said Wolff.

"This competition means that you won't be winning easily, but that you'll have a fierce fight on your hands. The feeling is even greater when you manage to come out on top, as we did in Spain.

"If we get the job done in Monaco, I'm pretty sure we'll bring down the garage roof."

ALL EYES ON ALONSO

The eyes of the motor racing world will turn to Alonso on Sunday evening as he takes to the famous brickyard for the 101st running of the Indy 500. Around 300,000 spectators are expected to watch the two-time F1 world champion bid to complete the second phase of the so-called 'Triple Crown' – that of winning the Monaco Grand Prix, the Indy 500 and the Le Mans 24 hours race.

Alonso has impressed during his time in America and will start from fifth on the grid. The F1 paddock will descend on his McLaren team's motorhome in Monaco for a special screening of the race which gets under way at 5pm BST.

HAMILTON LEADS HAYDEN TRIBUTES

Motorsport bid a tragic farewell to former MotoGP champion Nicky Hayden who died on Monday. The American, nicknamed the Kentucky Kid, collided with a car while cycling in Italy last week. Hamilton wrote on Instagram: "Dear Nicky, you will be missed," he wrote. "May God hold you high, you are forever in our hearts. My thoughts and prayers to you and your loved ones."



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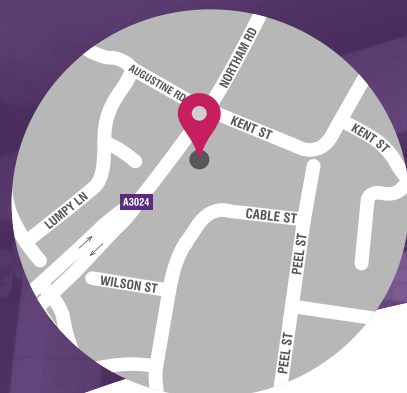
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PINK

Extra-time penalty wins Chiefs their first title

Exeter 23
Wasps 20

EXETER captain Gareth Steenson kicked a penalty three minutes from the end of extra-time to see the Chiefs crowned Aviva Premiership champions.

A thrilling Twickenham final saw Steenson's dramatic strike edge out Wasps 23-20, and meant Exeter were crowned champions of England for the first time in their 146-year history.

Exeter were a fourth division club when rugby union went professional 22 years ago, and they only arrived in the Premiership in 2010, which underlines the staggering scale of their achievement.

The game finished 20-20 after 80 minutes. Exeter led by 11 points approaching half-time, but Wasps' pursuit of the Premiership title for a first time since 2008 was driven relentlessly by centre Jimmy Gopperth, who scored a try and kicked two penalties and two conversions.

New Zealand-bound British and Irish Lions squad member Elliot Daly also added a try, and Exeter had to dig deep after losing in the final to Saracens 12 months ago.

First-half tries by Daly's Lions colleague Jack Nowell and full-back Phil Dollman – plus two Steenson conversions – built a 14-3 advantage, yet Gopperth's touchdown just before half-time appeared to tilt the balance psychologically.

But Exeter dominated the additional 20 minutes in terms of territory, and three Steenson penalties – his winner arriving in the 97th minute – sent the Chiefs fans among a 79,000 crowd wild.

The Chiefs become England's eighth different Premiership champions after Newcastle, Leicester, Wasps, Sale Sharks, Saracens, Harlequins and Northampton, and no-one could deny them their moment of glory in the Twickenham sunshine.

A minute's silence was observed before kick-off in memory of the Manchester Arena bombing victims, while flags flew at half-mast on a sunny, breezy day in south-west London.



Left, Exeter Chief's Gareth Steenson celebrates. Right, Wasps' Elliot Daly runs in to score his side's second try.

Much of the final's build-up had been about the potential dominance of the Exeter pack, and those comments appeared justified as Chiefs gained two penalties inside the opening four minutes to pile pressure on Wasps.

And even when Wasps pilfered possession, they appeared nervous and edgy, which was underlined when fly-half Danny Cipriani kicked possession directly into touch and cost his team a possible attacking avenue.

Exeter were not to be denied for long, though, and they forged ahead when flanker Kai Horstmann won quality lineout possession, hooker Luke Cowan-Dickie burst clear in midfield and then Nowell finished brilliantly from 20 metres.

It was a try of stunning

simplicity delivered at the highest pace, and Steenson's conversion opened up a seven-point lead before a Gopperth penalty after 17 minutes got Wasps moving on the scoreboard.

Wasps lost number eight Nathan Hughes and prop Phil Swainston for head injury assessments – Hughes returned nine minutes after going off – yet Exeter continued to enjoy control, and they struck again 12 minutes before half-time.

Former Bath centre Ollie Devoto made the crucial break, crashing deep into Wasps territory, before Dollman cut a superb attacking angle and Wasps could not keep him out, with Steenson's conversion making it 14-3.

But Wasps, totally against the run of play, struck on the stroke

of half-time by claiming a try as brilliantly delivered as it was unexpected.

Wasps had been under so much pressure, yet they suddenly found a way through Exeter's defence when Cipriani found hooker Tommy Taylor before scrum-half Dan Robson broke and Gopperth touched down behind the posts before converting his own try.

And it meant that Wasps trooped off just four points adrift, giving themselves a foothold in the final and delivering Exeter with a sharp reminder of their ability.

If Exeter were rocked by the score, it continued into the second-half as Wasps went ahead for a first time when Hughes broke five tackles inside his own half, before wing Christian Wade was freed in

space, and his kick and chase saw possession bounce kindly for Daly to finish off.

Gopperth's conversion went over via the post, then Exeter saw Dollman limp off, and the final had taken a major unexpected turn with more than 30 minutes still remaining.

Gopperth and Steenson then exchanged penalties, and despite late Exeter pressure, it went to an extra 20 minutes, when Exeter prevailed.

ISSN 0969-563X



P65P ISSN 0969-563X

Published by Newsquest Media (Southern) Ltd and printed at Newsquest (Southern) Ltd, from the offices at Newspaper House, Redbridge, Southampton, SO16 9JX. Telephone 023 8042 4800. Registered at the Post Office as a newspaper. 126th year.

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